1 FX Art Ed Marcelo sends sketches to Dehong He to give an idea of what we want on the cover...

2 He comes back with this sketch a few days later. As you can see, it's very close to the final version.

The final cover, in its word-free glory.

3 The sketch is refined and extra detail is added.

4 Final details are added, with He expertly rendering skin and hair, as well as the fire in the background.

Cover artist
DEHONG HE

COUNTRY: China
SOFTWARE USED:
Photoshop
WEB: www.hdhcg.com

This month's truly stunning cover artwork was painted by the incredibly talented Chinese artist Dehong He. After an initial briefing by ImagineFX Art Editor Marcelo Furquim, He set to work on painting our fiery vision – completing the piece in around a week.

He supplied us with a layered Photoshop file, enabling us to remove the woman for our back cover. See more of this incredible artist at the site above, and look out for more in a forthcoming issue of ImagineFX. ●

Happy Birthday to us! It's been a fantastic first year, and thanks to all of you for making it so great. Here's how some of our artists said 'Happy Birthday'...

ting!

$99?

It's been a crazy year... Congratulations IFX!!

Jonny Duddle, www.duddlebug.com

1

Happy Birthday!

Aly Fell, www.darkrising.co.uk

HAPPY BIRTHDAY 1st!

Kuang Hong, www.zemotion.net

Happy Birthday!

Benita Winckler,
www.dunkelgold.de

Happy Anniversary ImagineFX
Congratulations !

glen angus

Glen Angus, www.gangus.net

Glenn Jackson,
www.tokyocrows.com

SUGAR

SPICE

www.imaginefx.com

FORUM
CHALLENGE
Winner

Introducing...

Featured artists

ImagineFX calls on the finest digital artists in the world to offer you the best guidance and to share their techniques and inspiration…

David Levy

David Levy, one of the founders of the successful Steambot Studios joins ImagineFX this month to bring his unique approach to concept art. Using custom brushes, David shows you how he develops an idea using basic shapes and forms before refining the details. See his workshop, beginning on page 68, and our Master of Art interview (page 54).
www.vyle-art.com

John Kearney

John Kearney is a firm favourite of ImagineFX (having painted both human and alien covers for issue 8) and this month we thought it only right to showcase his amazing artwork in our Artist Portfolio interview (see page 62). Discover what John's up to at the moment, what drives his creativity and what's next for this up-and-coming artist.
www.brushsize.com

Andrew Jones

The ConceptArt.org co-founder and all-round artistic genius Andrew Jones joins our expert panel of artists this month. Find out how he adds texture to his images, using anything he can get his hands on (including his ex-girlfriend's fishnets) to add depth and detail. Look out for more exclusive workshops from Andrew coming soon in IFX.
www.androidjones.com

Jonny Duddle

Jonny has had stints as a children's entertainer and high school art teacher before becoming a freelance illustrator and concept artist. His work often involves creating a line-up of games characters to show an art team how they relate to each other size-wise. He shares his tips on sizing up your characters on page 84.
www.duddlebug.com

Dave McKean

A true legend in the fantasy art world, Dave McKean shares his incredible portfolio this month in our six-page interview beginning on page 42. Discover Dave's views on visual storytelling, what's inspired him throughout his career and what he's working on next. It's your chance to get into the head of one of the most celebrated and successful artists in the UK.

Bobby Chiu

Occupying his regular slot in our Artist Q&A section, Imaginism Studio's head honcho Bobby Chiu makes light work of atmospheric effects, and gives tips on how to pose figures. Check out page 34 for more. While you're at it, check out Bobby's new website at the address below, where you can buy prints, books and more…
www.imaginismstudios.com

Welcome
Wear us with pride!

By the time you read this, I hope you'll have noticed your free gift this issue – a stunning T-shirt transfer from the brilliant concept artist and illustrator Kuang Hong. So warm up your iron and get transfer-ing. Find out more about the design on page 29.

You'll also notice a cover completely clear of words. It's a brilliant chance to look more carefully at how one of the best digital painters in the world today – Dehong He – crafts his stunning imagery.

Issue 13's in-depth art workshops are headed up by David Levy (aka Vyle), who guides you through the process of creating truly stunning concept art using custom brushes (see page 68). You'll also find a sampler of his recent Gnomon Workshop training series on your DVD.

Elsewhere, discover 25 tips on drawing and painting dragons (page 78), Jonny Duddle's guide to sizing up game characters (page 84) and the winner of our Reader Challenge, Will Beck, shows you how to illustrate a classic tale with a twist.

Oh, and it's our first birthday – turn back a page for some messages from your favourite artists…

Rob Carney, Editor
rob@imaginefx.com

Subscribe now! Turn to page 33
United States readers turn to page 73

Five things…
you'll find in this issue of ImagineFX

1 Expert art advice
Check out the techniques and skills of the world's best artists in our Q&A section. They share their knowledge, beginning on **Page 34**

2 New year, new ways
The new year presents a perfect chance to try new techniques and experiment with styles… **Page 22**

3 Sketchbook art
Kuang Hong reveals his secret sketches in this month's sketchbook feature **Page 50**

4 Top ten sci-fi books
Our top ten sci-fi book artwork – with covers from Jim Burns, Fred Gambino and other seminal artists. See if you agree with our choices! **Page 60**

5 Brodie's Tales
Our exclusive new comic prequel to Brodie's Law kicks off this month. Unmissable! **Page 114**

FANTASY & SCI-FI DIGITAL ART
ImagineFX

Contents

Artist WORKSHOPS

"Each creature's history helps us to
understand its personality" Joel Carlo (page 74)

Image: Joel Carlo

Artist GALLERIES

Artist RESOURCES

REGULARS

"It's a personal challenge not using references" **John Kearney (page 62)**

Reader FXPosé

THE PLACE TO SHARE YOUR DIGITAL ART

Eric R Martin

LOCATION: US
WEB: http://ghostwolf82.deviantart.com
http://darklegacy.fantasyonlin
EMAIL: ghostwolf@elfwood.zzn.com
SOFTWARE: Photoshop

"Ever since I discovered there were other worlds, I've been utterly enthralled and lost in them," says Eric. They may only exist in his mind, but that just makes them easier to reach. "I find myself closing my eyes from time to time and travelling there."

The early days of pirate adventures, dragon quests and ocean odysseys are the fuel Eric draws on. "So, in essence, my work has only ever come from the personal depths of my imagination."

Working mainly in Photoshop, Eric uses his Wacom tablet to paint over the sketches he's constantly hashing out in his drawing books."

1 LAND'S END "Coming to a fork in the road in our lives, we see the vast country that is an unknown, unexplored opportunity. Maybe this time we'll escape the demons of our past – hot on our heels and bent to drag us back into the dark woods that is our misery."

2 FORGOTTEN "I think everyone has had the feeling of being stuck in the ground as those who love us move on and leave us behind," says Eric. "No matter how hard you reach out, they're gone forever. Your only companions are the ghosts of the past who refuse to abandon you like everyone else has."

ARTIST OF THE MONTH

Eric R Martin wins a copy of Exotique 2, featuring the world's best character art, and Exposé 4, showcasing the universe's finest digital artists. Find out more at: www.ballisticpublishing.com.

Artist crit

Concept artist Francis Tsai gives his view

"I really enjoy Forgotten. The strong composition, limited colour palette and textural quality are very appealing, and the piece has a great storybook feel. The flattened feel is very appealing as well: it reminds me a bit of Japanese wood block art. The graphic approach works well with the texture and colours."

①

②

🇺🇸 **Steve Thomas**
LOCATION: US
WEB: www.stevethomasart.com
EMAIL: stevothomas@msn.com
SOFTWARE: Photoshop 4

Steve is a graphic artist and illustrator with eight years of digital art experience. "Self-taught, I started painting with acrylics and quickly made the transition to the computer." And although he still paints traditionally from time to time, "digital media offers me the no mess, easy-to-alter kind of freedom that is hard to ignore for a freelance artist."

Steve's interest in science fiction and fantasy art goes way back: "I've always drawn dragons, spaceships and sword-wielding warriors. As much as I liked creating those images, I equally enjoyed looking at other artists' work."

Inspired first by the book covers of Larry Elmore and Frank Frazetta, "my influences have multiplied exponentially with the introduction of the internet and online portfolios. I can't get enough of this stuff."

① **NOT SO FAST** "Half-man, half-spider, all fright." He is the gatekeeper to a domain very few return from.

② **FLIGHTLESS FREAK** "Disfigured by alien chemical warfare, this poor soul is doomed to wander the wastelands with wings that don't work and a bulging eye that can only see his death." Poor creature!

🇹🇭 **Suttichart Sarapaiwanich**
LOCATION: Thailand
WEB: www.geocities.com/ocjoepus/index.html
EMAIL: sea_cret@hotmail.com
SOFTWARE: Photoshop, Illustrator

Suttichart graduated from the decorative art faculty of Thailand's Silpakorn University in 1993 and immediately became the co-editor of Thai comic magazine a-comic. "I then spent two years as a graphic designer, but in 1999 I finally started work as a comic artist."

Suttichart created the Thai manga Joe the Sea-Cret Agent, printed in Katch, a teen fashion magazine. "The story's set in the future when all sea creatures have evolved to live with humans, and my main character, Joe, is a freelance detective in New York."

Also a freelance cartoonist and illustrator who's worked with the likes off Nike, Suttichart is, "happy with my childhood dream career, a comic artist."

1 ANGRY JACKPOT An alternative cover for Suttichart's second manga book featuring Joe. "This guy is Jackpot, a seahorse character, and in the background is Yao-wa-rach, the Chinatown of Thailand."

2 S/28-29 This episode from Suttichart's comic is titled 'New York Summerland'. It has already been made into an animation.

IFX INSIGHT
"This piece features some inspired character design and storytelling. The mixture of styles works brilliantly, as well."
Rob Carney, Editor

🇺🇸 **Eric Spray**

LOCATION: US
WEB: www.conceptart.org/forums/
showthread.php?t=71614
EMAIL: ESpray.1@Go.CCAD.edu
SOFTWARE: Photoshop CS2, Illustrator
CS2, Corel Painter

Currently a senior at the Columbus College of Art & Design, majoring in Illustration, Eric intends to pursue a career as a concept artist upon graduating.

"The emphasis of my art is directed towards environmental design," says Eric. "However, abnormally large monsters often work their way into my illustrations." A possible explanation for this could be found in Eric's early movie collection: "As a child it consisted of films like Godzilla, King Kong, Clash of the Titans, The Seventh Voyage of Sinbad, and Jason and the Argonauts. I used to watch these films religiously. It's why my art has become so heavily influenced by fantasy and sci-fi themes."

1 THE REIGN OF THE BEAST The topic for this illustration was 'Welcome to the Beginning of the End.' "I chose to illustrate my interpretation of the end of the world as a giant Hell beast walking down a city street at night."

2 THE SEA SEUSS MONSTER "A page from a children's book by Dr Seuss inspired me to create this one," explains Eric. "It's an old pirate ship that is about to be consumed by an enormous whale-like creature."
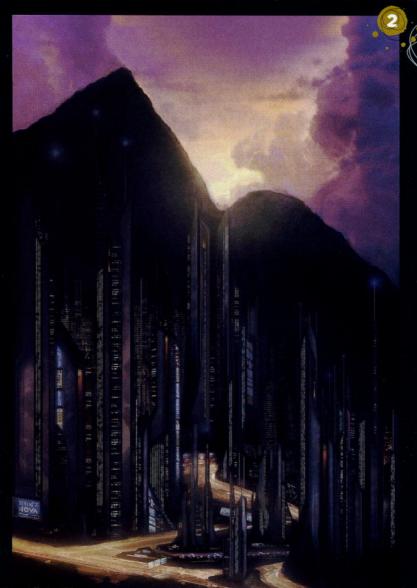
IFX INSIGHT

"In Lost City, the incredible modern buildings seem to almost form a second mountain chain opposing the natural landscape behind them."

Marcelo Furquim, Art Editor

Chris Stoelting

LOCATION: Australia
WEB: digital-import.deviantart.com
EMAIL: chris.stoelting@gmail.com
SOFTWARE: Photoshop, Terragen, Bryce, Illustrator, Apophysis.

As a youngster, Chris was exposed to many of the now classic science fiction movies and, together with his interest in possible other worlds, this helped form his love of sci-fi. "Art also started when I was very young" adds Chris. "From drawing fantasy dragons and demons to bizarre landscapes on other imagined planets."

His schoolbooks covered in various sketches and lacking in the actual schoolwork, Chris spent most of his time in the art labs. During this time Chris studied various computer subjects, including web design, and was finally introduced to digital art.

"The only previous exposure I had to digital art was drawing with MS Paint when I was 12 years old." With that in mind, Chris started out with the basics: "Just the keyboard, mouse and an early version of Photoshop. Now I'm addicted to digital art, having upgraded to digital tablets and an arsenal of software."

1 PROVING GROUNDS "This planet's civilisation was destroyed thousands of years ago and lies in ruins, scattered among the strange land forms. Its tight mazed formations are now used to train fighter pilots."

2 LOST CITY With modern buildings mixed in among the older style structures, "Blade Runner had a large influence on this one."

1

2

Dénes Imre Nagy
LOCATION: Australia
WEB: http://zakariah.deviantart.com
EMAIL: denesnagyart@hotmail.com
SOFTWARE: Photoshop CS2,
Illustrator CS2, Corel Painter IX

Whether watching Star Wars as a kid or being absorbed into the world of Tolkien as a young adult, Dénes has always been interested in science fiction and fantasy. "It's awesome," he says, "that the creativity all those people put into their film-making can inspire kids to one day do the same for the next generation."

He adds: "I've loved drawing creatures, characters and landscapes since an early age and now with the digital age, it's even easier and faster for people like myself to show what their imaginary worlds look like."

Dénes draws for Access Media, a textbook company and doing a little freelance illustration too. "I have only painted digitally in the last year and a half," he says, "but I'm having little 'happy accidents' along the way that make it interesting."

1 GENERAL UNION "This is the prelude to the final battle in a story I've worked on. The Sauron Army emerge from the smoke bombs to surprise the Arndom Coalition."

2 DRAGONSTAR ON DARK STALLION "This is a nightmarish vision of the demon Qeteb reborn in the body of DragonStar and riding his dark mount. His demon comrades are lurking in the distance."

1

Björn Wirtz
LOCATION: Germany
WEB: www.derwolpertinger.de
EMAIL: webmaster@derwolpertinger.de
SOFTWARE: Photoshop

Björn was born in the late 70s, and started drawing at the age of four. "I always created strange comic characters back then. They're pretty fun to look at now."

Thankfully, after a creative pause during adolescence, "I found the way back and decided to study visual communication at the University in Krefeld, Germany." Through the work he did there Björn made first contact with computer programs including Photoshop. Later in his studies, Björn concentrated on digital illustration and finally graduated last year.

"When I recall the days of playing Battletech in the mid-1990s or later on the fun I had painting Warhammer characters, I'm convinced that the interest in fantasy and science fiction has always been there." But the real breakthrough came with the discovery of cgtalk in 2002. The online community continues to inspire: "It helps push me to become better."

When it comes down to it, Björn loves creating fictional environments and images that convey certain moods. "In the future," he says, "I would like to work as a concept artist."

1 WESTERN ENVIRONMENT This image started as a test for a newly created rock brush. "I liked the initial shapes a lot and decided to further work on it. As the painting evolved I imagined some settlers in unexplored scenery searching for resources."

2 THE BREAKUP "Despite the warm colours, I wanted this painting to convey a rather dark mood," says Björn. "Therefore I chose a pretty worn look that I've achieved through the overlaying and masking of several photographic textures."

Online FXPosé

Upload your portfolio to our brand new website at **www.imaginefx.com** and you could see your work grace these very pages – just like this month's winning artists...

🇺🇸 **Chuck Wadey**
LOCATION: US
WEB: www.chuckwadey.com
EMAIL: chuck@chuckwadey.com
SOFTWARE: Photoshop CS2
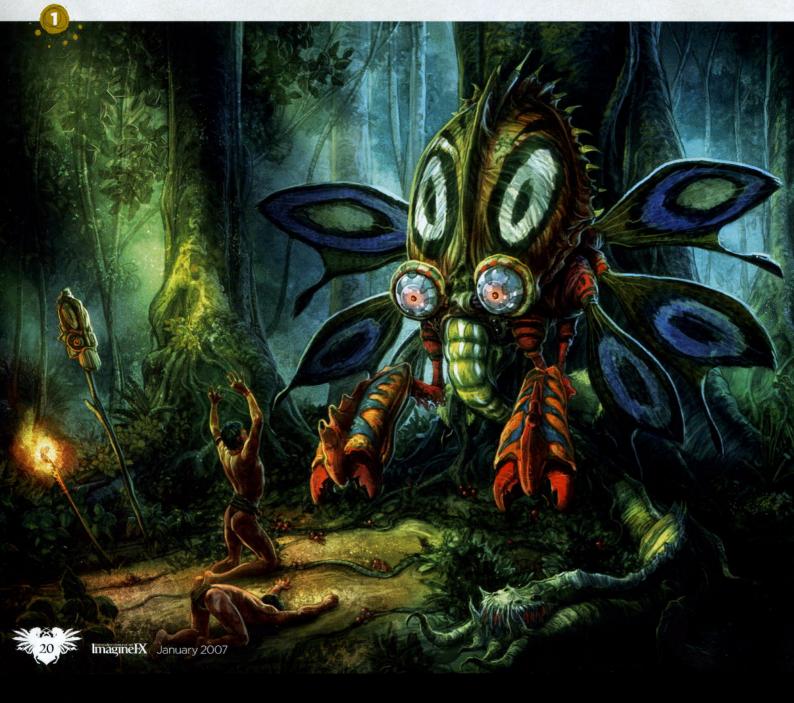
A professional games concept artist, with a CV including Activision's Spider-Man The Movie and Ultimate Spider-Man games, Chuck is currently accepting freelance contracts. Chuck has the honour of being our first ever ImagineFX weekly winner.
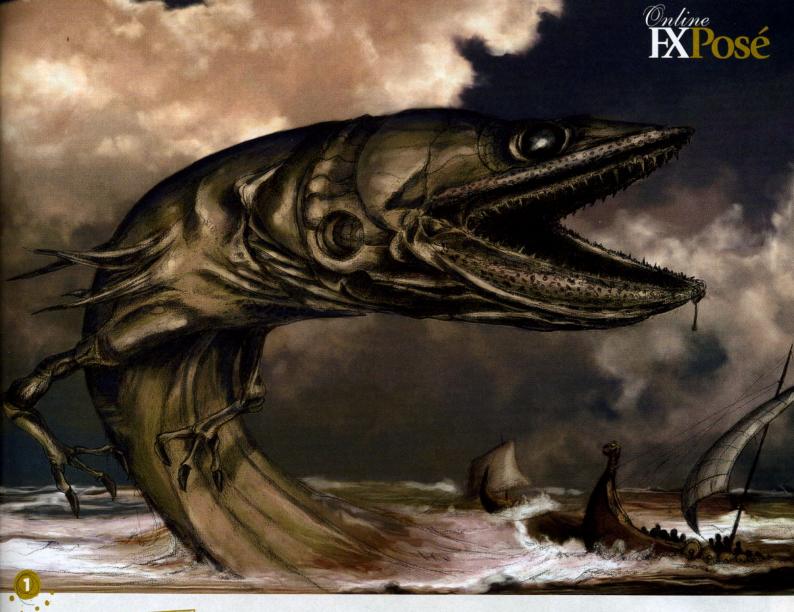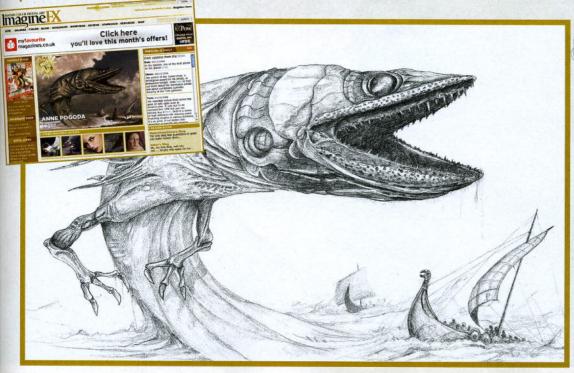
1 HYPNOTIZING "Hypnotizing was created for one of ConceptArt.org's creature of the week contests," says Chuck. "The creature emits a hypnotic brainwave that generates an artificial devotion so steadfast any beast will offer itself up for sacrifice, and so powerful that victims rejoice in the consumption of their own flesh..."

Anne Pogoda

LOCATION: Germany
WEB: http://azurelle.deviantart.com
SOFTWARE: Photoshop

Anne Pogoda, aka Azurelle on ImagineFX.com, is a designer and digital painter based in Berlin, Germany. She became the second ImagineFX.com weekly winner in December 2006.

1 LAGUZ "This image was inspired by a pencil sketch made by Petr Samberger from Czech Republic," comments Anne. "I saw that drawing and found it so excellent that I asked him what he'd think if I made a painting of it. He liked the idea, and so I started thinking of a concept and tried out some colour palettes. Then I painted the Laguz within two days. It's one of those paintings which worked out pretty well and is still one of my favourites."

BRODIE'S BACKSTORY
Starting this issue and for the next six issues, ImagineFX brings you the story of the early life of Jack Brodie, the eponymous hero of the Brodie's Law series.
Page 25

EXPOSÉ 4

CALL FOR ENTRIES
Ballistic Publishing is calling for entries for volume five of its Exposé series, with the chance to get your art into the beautiful and acclaimed portfolio.
Page 25

NARUTO WINNERS
Announcing the winners of our joint competition with Manga Entertainment, with Chad Walker's unique image scooping the top prize.
Page 27

New year's art resolutions

Resolve With the new year almost upon us, it's time to make some artistic resolutions and try something different in 2007…

We're all good at making New Year's resolutions, but there are many of us who aren't so good at keeping them.

Why not make a resolution you can keep: to try something new with your art this year? It doesn't have to be a bold, sweeping change; perhaps investigate a new piece of software, or research one of the artists who has always interested you.

To get some ideas and inspiration, we spoke to a few

> 66 **It's extremely tricky to master the pacing of a book which will take a year to draw** 99

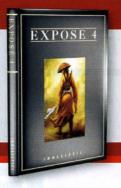Illustrator Joel Carlo says he would like to improve his figure drawing skills in 2007, but on this evidence he doesn't seem to be doing too badly to begin with.

ImagineFX regulars and asked them what they'd like to change, if anything, over the coming year. And if you thought professional artists were entirely confident with their work, think again…

"My concern isn't so much style as it is working on technique," says Joel Carlo, freelance illustrator (**www.joelcarlo.net**). "Style is one of those things that I believe just happens gradually, like schizophrenia, but my foundational skills have got a little sloppy as of late. I recently started taking life drawing classes again as a sort of refresher, and man was that a wake-up call!"

Manga artist Joanna Zhou, of Sweatdrop Studios (**www. sweatdrop.com**) wants to speed up her drawing. "My aim is to find a 'distilled' style which is visually pleasing yet simple enough to draw for a fast page turnaround," she says. "I've always been excruciatingly slow at sketching and that's quite inefficient if I plan to work full-time."

For concept artist Doug Williams (**www.dougbot.com**) it's entirely the reverse. "I'd like to find a bit more time to sketch and really plan out my work," he says. "I tend to work fast, and now it's time I start slowing down. I would also love to be able to paint and draw like Kent Williams… that man is phenomenal."

One thing all the artists have in common is a desire to learn new software. Joel says he loves ➤➤

FRAZER IRVING

Frazer Irving discusses his dream resolutions for 2007…

What other styles would you like to try out? Do you have a longing to paint like Michelangelo, for instance?
I have a lustful longing to do stippling with chopsticks. Or syringes. Right now though I am experimenting with various painting styles in Photoshop for my comics work, though whatever I try to emulate it always looks like something *else*.
Any software packages you're dying to experiment with but have found a bit daunting in the past?
I'm tinkering with SketchUp at the moment to assist me with my settings. I would use the more complicated ones but my artist brain lacks the capability to deal with numbers like that.
Any workflow changes you'd dream of making?
Well for the next six months I'm doing two comics a month, so ideally I'd like to speed up a little bit. To this end I'm doing everything in Photoshop, so there will be no gear changes as I switch to inking, then scanning, then colouring and so on. This way I can sit in my chair at 7am and not move till 5pm (although this is not actually a good idea unless one happens to be sitting upon a commode).
Finally, what's the one thing you'd most like to improve on in 2007, in terms of your art?
My sense of colour.

Frazer is a prolific, award-winning comic book artist and a regular contributor to ImagineFX.
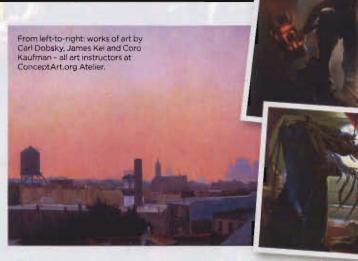*www.frazerirving.com*

Photoshop: "but I'm always interested in seeing how different artists use other programs to create their work. I love ZBrush too, but I realise I haven't even begun to touch the surface of what that program can do."

Joanna would love to get her hands on AnimeStudio Pro and FontLab, because "there's a constant controversy about suitable comic lettering fonts – so I've decided to design my own!" Meanwhile, Doug's excited about new 3D package Mudbox: "It's one of the few 3D programs that doesn't look very intimidating. It seems very intuitive."

And what one thing do they most want to change about their art? For Doug, it's simply to improve overall. "I feel like most of my art is all smoke and mirrors, and I don't want that any more," he confesses. "I'm finally looking at anatomy and colour theory books." Joanna's determined to get into sequential storytelling, daunting as it may sound. "It's extremely tricky to master the pacing of a book which can be read in less than an hour, but will take a year to draw," she says. And Joel's resolution is just to find more time for his art: "I wrote the book on Attention Deficit Disorder and I think I'll be a lot more productive in 2007 if I can just keep mine in check," he laughs.

We'll be watching with interest to see if these resolutions come to pass. And why not let us know your own art-related resolutions at **www.imaginefx.com**? ●

From left-to-right: works of art by Carl Dobsky, James Kei and Coro Kaufman – all art instructors at ConceptArt.org Atelier.

ConceptArt Atelier

School's open Massive Black launches major new training school – the ConceptArt artist's studio

ConceptArt.org and art studio Massive Black have launched a major new teaching school, the ConceptArt.org Atelier. The Atelier (which means artist's studio) aims to prepare student artists in the fields of entertainment, fine art and illustration for the commercial world – something which art training programs at other universities are not achieving, says ConceptArt.

"The curriculum is a thick mixture of traditional and historical art training and cutting edge digital production," explains Jason Manley of Massive Black.

"It's deeper than what we use to train interns here at Massive Black and should yield very good results. The students who've begun are already doing a great job on their tasks. We'll settle for nothing less than greatness."

High talent, hard-working students are being accepted for the school, located in San Francisco, and while tuition fees may seem steep at $600 a month, this is affordable compared to other private art school programs. So if you're serious about learning your art and working in entertainment as a concept designer, check out **www.conceptart.org/school**

No Cintiq? DIY

Home made Enterprising artist builds his own

Artist Drew Northcott, like many people, had been lusting over a Wacom Cintiq combined LCD/ graphics tablet for a long time – but also like many people, he simply couldn't afford one. So he decided to build his own equivalent, or at least attempt to, by combining an LCD monitor and his standard Wacom tablet.

"I wasn't really certain it would work till I stripped the monitor," says Drew. "Once I was sure all that metal could go, that's when I knew for sure." After much trial and error, plus some

mishaps, he actually succeeded – and has documented the whole process on his website, step by step.

The feedback he's got has been unexpectedly huge, with thousands of people visiting the pages, prompting Drew to set up a forum for people to share their own building experiences.

Drew now intends to refine his creation and add further build notes, as well as fitting in more art along the way: "As to further builds, does anyone know where I can get a 100-watt steam engine?"

See the full process on Drew's site at **www.bongofish.co.uk**.

Drew's hybrid LCD/graphics tablet, complete with custom black dye job.
Photo © Hannah Northcott.

Brodie's Tales

Original sin Explore the backstory of a comic book icon in our new series

For the next six issues, ImagineFX is proud to bring you an exclusive new comic series from the creators of Brodie's Law. Brodie's Tales is a series of short stories about the early life of Jack Brodie, the eponymous hero of the best-selling **comic book created by Daley Osiyemi and David Bircham.**

Aspiring East End criminal Brodie is just 18, yet already becoming infamous for his deeds. But his life is about to spiral out of control as he betrays his best friend, and dark events unfold as he meets an ancient Samurai lord...

"The first series explores the reasoning and philosophy of a young Jack Brodie, the catalyst of his life and the break in friendship with his best friend Harry Wade," explains Daley. "The story explores how the tattoo of death that Jack unknowingly places on his back will end up controlling his entire life." For fans of the comic book, Brodie's Tales promises to be a fascinating insight into the mind of Jack Brodie – and for newcomers, there's no better way to get acquainted. The Mark of Death, and see more at **www.brodieslaw.com.**

The story explores how Jack's tattoo of death will end up controlling his life.

Exposé your work

Get showcased Fame and awards are up for grabs

Ballistic Publishing's Exposé series of digital art books rumbles on with a call for entries for volume 5. Submitted images can be created in any 3D or 2D digital package, which includes manipulated photography. There are numerous award categories, including Fantasy, Environment, Science Fiction, Horror and Faery Folk, plus the coveted Grand Master and Master awards across all categories.

This year, for the first time, previous Exposé Grand Master winners will join the Advisory Board for judging. Renowned artist Pascal Blanché, who won in Exposé 3, is one of these. "The Grand Master award was the first official public recognition I ever had for my work," he says. "Being showcased in Exposé is the best way to get contacts within the professional industry – and nothing compares to having your own work featured in such a beautiful portfolio."

The closing date for entries is 26 February 2007, with the book due to be published in June. You can enter online and get all the other details at **www.ballisticpublishing.com/books/expose5**.

The Exposé series is world-famous and has a long history of showcasing the best new digital art talent.

Life is Humiliation
by Matt Boyce

DAVE nosferatu escargot versus the Sun

yeah man its night time and I'm on the prowl for victims. man I'm so cool

oh bollocks
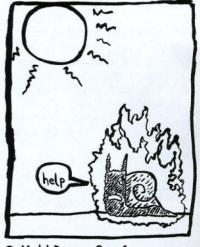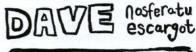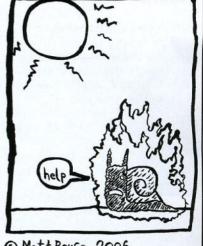
the continuing adventures of DAVE nosferatu escargot

help

© Matt Boyce 2006

www.mattboyce.com

In short...

The latest news in brief for digital artists

Get a job CGJobs

CGSociety has launched CGJobs, a new part of its online portfolio service. Each CGPortfolio now includes an extra Employment Details page, which enables you to add your CV and cover letter and which registered prospective employers can search. Of course, you can always opt out if you're not seeking work.

portfolio.cgsociety.org

Get 'em young... Colorelli

Wacom's new Colorelli game is aimed at children and offers a mixture of creativity and fun. The idea is to explore an island and use a Wacom pen and tablet to interact with the various characters thereon, as well as take on missions and other more creative activities. It costs £40.

www.colorelli.eu

Search engine SCIFInder

A new tool from Sfcrowsnest, SCIFInder is a specialist search engine (powered by the Google toolset) that only searches for content on sci-fi and fantasy websites. At the time of writing 16,000 sites have been indexed, with more being added all the time.

www.scifinder.co.uk

Web tool Colour wise

Adobe has released an online application that enables you to create colours themes that complement each other. It's primarily a tool for people who create web content, but is a handy resource for any artist. The website explains the various rules of colouring (from Analogous to Triad) and you have the opportunity to download your colourful efforts to use with Adobe Creative Suite 2 applications.

http://kuler.adobe.com

Fantasy bodies

Base model A freebie from Dark Anvil, plus two new and original fantasy Poser figures

Dark Anvil, creators of 3D fantasy models, has released a new free base model character for Poser artists – and we're proud to bring it to you on this issue's DVD. Known as the Heroine Base, the figure is modelled entirely from scratch, including the texturing, and intentionally features comic-book style proportions, such as longer legs. She also sports low-resolution body maps and hair, and is intended to be used as a starting point for your own creations.

To see what can be done with the Heroine, Dark Anvil has also released a new commercial figure, The Princess. "The Princess Tilliana character emerged from a story for our Dark Anvil world by Joe Bailey," explains MDM's Graeme McMillan.

"We set about modelling the character from scratch. We insist on using all our own original content. Even the skin texture set comes from our own exclusive resource."

On a rather uglier note, check out the new Smythlak Ironblood figure, a demon half-breed who's also been modelled entirely from scratch.

Smythlak and The Princess cost $10 each from Dark Anvil's site at **www. darkanvil.net**. And don't forget to experiment with your free Heroine figure on the DVD.

Your free Heroine Poser model was modelled from scratch, while the Princess is based on this free model.

Fantasy talk Explaining the inexplicable

"**Always start with a sketch. It's almost like a magic trick. Whatever you do, however complex it is, it always works!**"
David Levy, page 54

DAZ|3D for free

Give away A bundle of content for you...

Thanks to the kind folks at DAZ (www.daz3d.com), we've got more outstanding freebies waiting for you on this issue's DVD: not one, not two but four professional 3D models, which can be used with DAZ Studio.

Aiko 3, previously sold for $40, was created specifically for anime and manga art, and sports that classic Japanese look. To spice up your Aiko renderings, use the Nyoko pigtail hair (as sold for $12), which fits perfectly on the model and comes with 15 hair textures. More follicle fun can be had with the Miki hair, a layered hairstyle with numerous morph targets that should blend seamlessly with Aiko.

Finally, there's the stunning set of Shadow Dancer clothing created by Lourdes Mercado, featuring a secret agent-style look for many popular characters and fantastic attention to detail. Check out some more of Lourdes's creations at **www. daz3d.com/shop.php? op=artistlist&artist=5635**.

The Shadow Dancer clothing set from Lourdes Mercado.
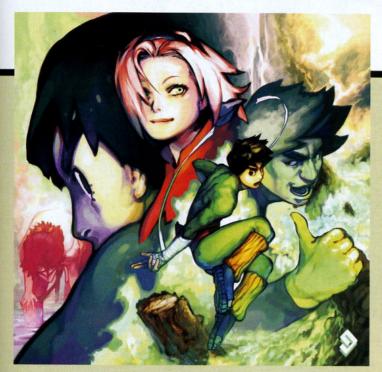
Aiko 3 can be adorned with the Nyoko and Miki hair sets.

Chad Walker's unique approach to storytelling wooed the judges. He picks up a 20-inch LCD TV, copy of Naruto and a subscription to ImagineFX.

Naruto winners unleashed!

Prizes Announcing the winner of our anime-tastic competition

Back in issue 7, we, along with Manga Entertainment, set you the challenge of sending in your best manga-themed images. After sifting through hundreds of entries, we've found our winners. First place, and prizes of a Toshiba 20-inch LCD TV, Naruto Unleashed on DVD and a subscription to ImagineFX, goes to US reader Chad Walker. Chad, on receiving the news told us, "I can't really express excitement in text, but if I were a firework I'd be exploding and my colours would be all over Disneyland."

The second prize of a subscription to ImagineFX and Naruto Unleashed on DVD goes to Swedish artist Sida Yin, for her highly original interpretation of the brief. Congratulations to the winners and the ten runners-up, who each receive a copy of Naruto Unleashed on DVD, courtesy of Manga Entertainment.

For more on Naruto and Manga Entertainment's range of DVDs see www.manga.co.uk.

Second prize-winner Sida Yin from Sweden created a highly original and striking manga-themed image.

★★ Winners ★★

First prize
Chad Walker USA

Second prize
Sida Yin Sweden

Runners up
Boris M Fredes Australia
Sonia Cook Australia
Claudius Bartmuß Germany
Om Muangkitti UK
Claudia Stocker UK
Simon Davis UK
Mark Light UK
Andy Johnson UK
Joshua Chua US
Leos Ng Hong Mun Singapore

Letters

YOUR FEEDBACK & OPINIONS

Contact the editor, Rob Carney, on **rob@imaginefx.com** or write to ImagineFX, Future Publishing, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath, BA1 2BW, UK

Don't throw it in...

Until about 12 years ago I was a part-time freelance illustrator, but now I just paint for myself. I'd just love to get into digital art, but as I have no one to turn to for help or advice in using the software I have, I can't make any progress. It must be my age I suppose (60), but I just can't to grips with my graphics programs. I've sought help from all the local colleges and universities, further education centres and other learning centres, as well as libraries, consultants, computer shops, plus individuals, all to no avail. I have

DID YOU MISS ISSUE 12?
See page 97 for details on how you can get your hands on it.
– Subscribe and get 35% off!

exhausted all the avenues of enquiry I can think of, and then some, without success. Which leaves me to conclude that there is no one in my area of North Wirral, Merseyside, knowledgeable enough to show me some of the ropes. I've been encouraged to take a course, but there are none relating to most of these programs. So how does an old codger like me get started? If I can't find a solution, then I'll have no choice but to throw in the towel. If there is a solution, then I would be glad to hear from anyone with any suggestions. Yours frustratedly...
Alan K, via email

Rob replies: Well Alan, I'd suggest treating software as you would real media. Pick up a piece of software such as ArtRage (www.artrage.com) and experiment. You don't need to master every element of say, Photoshop (channels and masks, for instance) to be a good digital artist. Think of the computer as an extension of your traditional tools – and don't be afraid of making mistakes. And of course, keep reading ImagineFX for lots of artist tips and advice.

Questions and longer answers

I find your Artist Q&A section invaluable, but because (I suspect) of page limitations, they often don't go into as much depth as they could do. Any chance you could expand the page count or put some more in-depth questions on the DVD?
David Simpson, via email
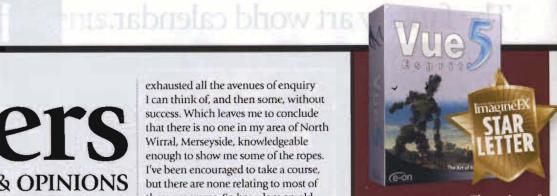
Rob replies: Thanks for your letter, David. Our Q&A section is one of the most popular parts of the magazine and we're always looking for ways to improve it. Thanks for your suggestions, we've taken them on board.

Fantasy overload

I love your Legends features, but why are they always classic fantasy artists? Can we see some variety please?
Jason Turner, via email

Rob replies: To the point, Jason! You'll be pleased to know that this issue we're featuring one of the UK's best-known contemporary artists, Dave McKean (page 42), and over the coming months we have plans for comic artists, sci-fi painters and more. Watch this space...

More manga

After years of reading and enjoying manga comics I've decided to try my hand at producing one for myself. I discovered ImagineFX a while ago and found both the standard of artwork and the quality of the printed paper to be very high. I was very impressed with Joanna Zhou, and her article in issue 7 (Manga Tips for Beginners) was just the thing that got me started.

So, armed with a Manga Studio 3 Pro, I sat at my computer... and died. Is there anyone who can understand this program? I doubt it. But, just maybe, the wonderful Joanna might. Please, before I go totally nuts, ask her to write an article on the subject. I've followed other workshops using Photoshop and Painter IX and so on – so I figure if anybody is able to lift this vale of gloom, ImagineFX and Joanna can.
Mike, via email from Amsterdam

Rob replies: Thanks, Mike. I've passed your comments on to Joanna. We have plans for more manga content in the future – what do other readers think? Would you like to see Manga Studio Pro workshops? Let me know by emailing **rob@imaginefx.com**.

MANGA TIPS FOR BEGINNERS

Joanna Zhou's excellent manga workshop from issue 7 was a hit with Mike, and we'll be featuring more manga content in the near future.

Artist Q&A

GOT A QUESTION FOR OUR EXPERTS? EMAIL **HELP@IMAGINEFX.COM**

Full-size Q&A images are on your DVD

Adding textures to an image
can help to give meaning to
your finished piece. For this
piece, I've used a series of balsa
wood cut-outs that I use for
body airbrushing models.

Question
How can I use textures to add personality? *Ella Simpson, England*

Answer
Andrew replies

Textures are a significant addition to any finished piece of art. Not only can they add a new level of detail or believability to an image, but they can also be an opportunity to embed more meaning and content into your work.

Texture-wise I will use anything from my ex-girlfriend's scanned in lace fishnet tights to my great grandmother's hand crotched doilies to achieve a cool texture. Trash off the streets, microphotography... the images that work the best are ones that have a good variety of shapes and ones where the positive and negative space is well balanced.

Painter IX.5 is my tool of choice for the application of textures. I have chosen Painter IX.5 specifically because of its robust painting engine and the Chalk tool feature. Painter enables you to import any black and white image and transforms in into a dynamic resource for adding textures to your image. This is a simple feature that provides enormous potential.
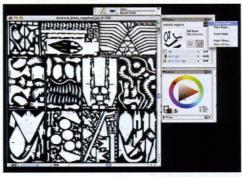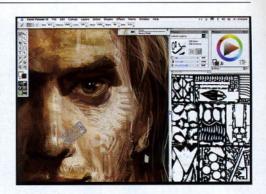
Step-by-step: Adding textures to an image

1 Find your texture. For this piece of work I have taken a series of balsa wood cut-outs that I use for body airbrushing models. Before getting into the texture, I will lay out the base colours and forms that I want to texture upon.

2 Open your texture image in Painter, keeping it around 1,000x1,000 pixels. Convert the image to black and white. Select the image, and in the Paper dialog box click the black arrow and select Capture Paper. Give your image a name.

3 Using the Chalk or Charcoal tool apply the texture. There are five variables within the Paper window you can adjust: two buttons and three slider bars. Experiment with different Chalk variations until you find one that works for you.

Question

I'm painting a female character in a simple setting in natural light. However, I find a lot of difficulty in painting her with, for example, a wall, without the whole image looking plain, flat and boring. How should I treat the colours or make the lighting more interesting? *Steven Hart, US*

Answer
Hong replies

First construct your sketch's composition: where the character is and how she will interact with the background. Just paint big, loose blocks of colour for now. That done, you can start adding lighter details, roughly where some joints, edges, and the light and shadow areas may be. This acts as a guideline.

Create a new layer and set its master opacity to 50-60 per cent. With my brush set to Colour, I lay out my basic colours according to my planned lighting. Here I am using yellows to reflect the golden rays of sunset. The areas closer to the light source are brighter, the further parts darker, and those in shadows are close to the darkest tones of yellow-brown. I adjust the layer's opacity slightly to see how much colour I want, then

flatten this layer and the original sketched one, which provides me with most of the shadows.

Pick out some suitable textures for the walls and floors, copy them to a new layer set to

Overlay, erase and paint where needed and adjust the opacity.

Pull up the contrast using Curves – towards the top left to brighten the image, towards the bottom right will darken it.
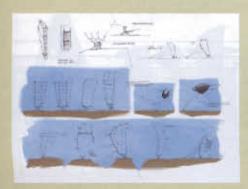
The three Ds: define, details, darken. Start adding textures and painting details. To finish the piece, refine some highlighted areas with streaks of light in the key area inside the outlines of the figure and objects.

Here I sketched out my composition and added some highlights to my blocked figure to show that the light source is coming from the model's left. When laying out the colours, take note of your planned light source and stick to it, remember details of highlights and shadows and don't just colour everything in yellow.

Before starting on a 3D model version of your concept design, it's a good idea to sketch out initial thumbnails with pencil and paper, or at least in a digital painting or drawing program.

Question

Is there an easy way to incorporate 3D modelling into a concept design process? *Fiona Duff, Scotland*

Answer
Francis replies

Well, I'm definitely a big fan of using whatever techniques and tools will help you get to where you want to go. It's a bit of a tricky slope, because 3D enables you to be extremely precise, and (at least in the early stages of design) unnecessary details can easily derail the design process. The main thing to keep in mind when using a 3D program for concept art is to avoid becoming too 'precious' with the model. Ideally, you would still be sketching and painting 'traditionally' (in 2D), and switching between 2D and 3D.

I used SketchUp (a 3D modelling program) recently as part of a design exercise at work. The project involved a large building with many repeated elements. I started traditionally, sketching out some thumbnails and quick perspectives with pencil and paper, and doing some value studies in Photoshop. Once I got the design to a certain point, I made a quick study model in 3D – with repeated architectural elements in particular, this process can actually be quicker than trying to draw an accurate perspective by hand, especially if you are still in the middle of the design stages.

The key thing to remember is that the model is not the final product, but rather a step along the way. Once you've answered the questions you had when you started the model, put it away and continue with whatever medium seems appropriate.

This image shows the model quickly blocked out, and imported as a 2D image back into Photoshop. Here, I can quickly iterate on details, materials, colours and the like.

Question

I have trouble posing figures realistically, particularly when they're in mid-action. Do you have any advice? *Jamie Stevens, England*

Answer
Bobby replies

When we have bodies in motion, we must consider physics: what are the effects of gravity on the pose? What about inertia or momentum? Which way is the body moving? All of these considerations will tell us in which forces are acting on our figure, and how much strain the body should undergo in order to do what it wants to do.
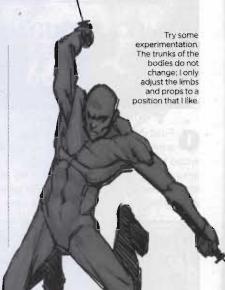
Next, consider anatomy. Bodies are limited in the ways that they can bend, twist, stretch and rotate. Artistically speaking, it's acceptable for you to exaggerate these limits, but not to ignore them altogether.

Take a leaping figure: when a body is airborne, gravity pulls it down, led by the trunk of the figure. Inertia dictates the limbs will tend to trail behind.

Even though the body is upright, we understand that the figure is airborne through the posing of the limbs relative to the body.

Try some experimentation. The trunks of the bodies do not change; I only adjust the limbs and props to a position that I like.

With that in mind, I sketch out my figure accordingly. If I'm unsure about how to position certain parts of the body, I will attempt to recreate that part of the pose myself, in order to see how far back an arm or a leg can extend behind the body without it starting to feel uncomfortable.

Question

When it comes to colouring skin I just can't get it right. My skin always looks blotchy or dirty, like the person rolled around in a mud patch! *Megan Anderson, Australia*

Answer
Mel replies

Skin is a difficult element to paint and shade. The skin tone mostly depends on the ambient light, so the main key to a successful texture is to keep this point in mind.

To avoid the mud/blotchy render, the best thing to do first of all is a colour scheme. The biggest mistake is to choose, for the shading, a dark brown, which will immediately give a dirty look to your skin. For the shadows it's best to pick a mixed colour between the one you've chosen for the skin base and the one for the general composition.

Light is also an important thing. Don't ever use white: white and black are the two 'dead colours', it's far better to use some light green or pink with some yellow touches; those colours will give more life to the skin. Now let's go into the details for the blending!

Question

If I've messed something up, or my painting's just not right, how can I salvage my image? *Harry Newton, Wales*

Answer
Andrew replies

Let's face it, not every creation is a masterpiece. But before that file finds a permanent home in your Deleted Items, give it a flip.

For the image here, I gave no consideration to composition or focal point, its really busy and perhaps over textured, a perfect victim for this type of experiment.

So, take the wounded art into Photoshop or Painter. Duplicate the layer, take the top layer and flip it horizontally. Using your layer effects, change the Opacity setting. This will take some experimenting on your part, if it's a predominantly dark image set it to Screen or Lighten, if there is more light than dark set it to Multiply or Darken. If you want something a little more asymmetrical, set it to Overlay.

Take the Move tool and, holding down Select, slide the top layer across the canvas. As you move one layer over the other your brain will desperately attempt to make sense out of the parade of chaos, eventually you will find something that you really respond to: flatten the layer and use this as the base for your new creation. Even if you don't get another masterpiece out of this, it's a great creative workout.

Not every composition is a masterpiece. This is the perfect victim for my experiment, as it's very busy and without focal point.
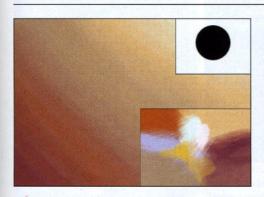
Using your layer effects, start to alter the Opacity setting. This is where you'll have to start experimenting: if it's a light image, set it to Darken, if it's darker, set it to Lighten.
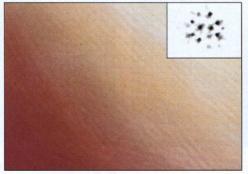
As you move one layer over the other, you will try to make sense of what you're seeing. Eventually, you will find something you like: you've got the base for your new creation!
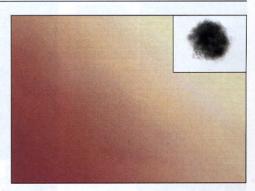
Step-by-step: Colouring skin

1 Here you can see my colour scheme; for the shading I've chosen a dark pink, with some touches of orange, and for the light a mix between a light green and a pale pink. I'm using a basic round edge with Spacing at 25 per cent and Opacity set to Pen Pressure.

2 This is a decisive part: skin must be perfectly blended. I blend it with a custom spackled brush and paint very lightly over the base in every direction until I'm totally happy. This kind of brush will give nice colour variations to the skin.

3 With another custom brush, I paint over the skin very slightly, I also add more pale yellow on the top of it and try to keep the little variations obtained previously. I blur the whole skin with the Blur tool with Strength set to 10 per cent.

Question

Can you explain to me the principles behind painting mist and fog?

Evie George, England

Answer

Bobby replies

Fog is commonly misunderstood to be something you can create in a painting simply by hitting a button and dulling all the colours with a low opacity white layer. First we need to realise that fog is an atmospheric effect that essentially enables us to see the air, and as such, it needs to be applied with some thought and planning.

Different atmospheric effects behave differently: fog is dense and will sink to the ground; smoke typically accompanies warm air, which rises and will take the smoke with it; haze lingers at altitude. Observation is the key here.

Air is a fluid medium, which means, when we move through it, we cause ripples. The presence of fog will make these currents visible so to paint realistic fog, we must take that into account.

Also, because fog consists of tiny droplets of water suspended in the air that reflect light, it will also dramatically change the ways in which our paintings are lit.

As an obscuring effect, fog can elicit in the viewer strong emotional responses ranging from wonder to dread, but care must be taken to apply it effectively.

The addition of fog effects can sometimes transform your image from being just good to being truly memorable.
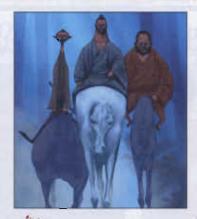
Step-by-step: Adding realistic looking fog

1 Atmospheric particulates will scatter light and dull the sharpness of details. I've shown this out-of-focus effect by laying down the foundations of my painting entirely in blue tones. I block in the major structures in blue silhouettes.

2 In a dynamic image, fog has weight and will be unevenly distributed, so I paint in rolls of mist along the ground. Also, the deeper something is into a fog, the less sharp it will be. The hind legs of the horses are hazier than the front ones.

3 I've already used blue for my base tones. Now I need to keep that in mind as I build up my other structures, such as the Samurai and their horses. The lighter a structure is in tone, the more it will be influenced by the blue fog.

4 Lastly, I add a light-toned blue layer with the opacity turned down to give the entire image an overall fog. Then I erase this layer over the Samurai and the horses to bring them out of the background and accentuate their prominence.

Water is not sharp edged, the whole shape has to be soft and for some parts round.

Question
What is the best way to paint authentic looking water?
Yvette Lambert, France

Answer
Melanie replies

Water is similar to glass in that it's non-coloured and translucent, so really hard to paint! One of the first things to think about is reflection: water (in motion or still) will reflect the light and the objects around it. In my fountain image, the water is moving and will reflect only light. For the shape, I just sketch quickly the way my water will flow, just using lines, then on another layer and with the highlight colour, I lightly paint some rays of water.

The shape also depends on how the water is sprayed out; if it's with strength then I will paint it with more light and more splashes (which can be some little dots of light). If, on the contrary, it's very slow, I will paint only long rays of water with big spots of light. To get a clearer understanding of this point, just turn on your kitchen tap and watch what happens.

Now that the first shape is done, I will detail certain parts and blur others. In this example I choose to pay particular attention to the area around the statue's mouth. This step is extremely important because the water is moving, so if you don't give this dynamic feeling, your water will look flat and plastic-like. Once this step is complete I add some final dots of light, then I duplicate the layer and set it on Soft Light with Opacity set to 10 per cent. This will add more brightness and dynamism to the whole thing.

I use a basic round edge with a dynamic shape to create the soft tiny rays of water, and the Blur tool (strength 30 per cent) to add more movement to the water.

Question
Any tips for a quick way to pre-visualise something large, like the development of a world? *Brooke Donald, Australia*

Answer
Philip replies

Usually, I start with very basic thumbnail sketches. The basic concept established, I like to quickly build a block model of it in a 3D package. Nothing fancy, just primitives with some slight alteration and lots of duplication to establish scale and visual rhythm. From here I begin playing with different lighting solutions and overall shape design. I usually focus on interesting positive/negative shapes, cast shadows, areas of visual interest, and so on. I also set up cameras around the world to further understand the space in 3D.

This approach enables me to see how the light is affecting the objects in the scene from multiple angles. Finally, I set my rendering parameters, further defining how the light will react to the space. Then I use techniques in Maya's mental ray renderer, such as global illumination and final gathering, to accentuate real world properties.

As you can see in the image above, a 3D block model layout of your location enables you to quickly visualise the big picture.

Question
I've downloaded some Photoshop brushes from my favourite artist's website, but how do I load them into Photoshop? *Damien Pearson, England*

Answer
Jonny replies

Firstly, you'll need to save the brush library in the right location. On a Mac this will be in Applications\Adobe Photoshop\Presets\Brushes, while on Windows you'll find it at C:\Program Files\Adobe\Adobe Photoshop\Presets\Brushes.

Load them into the Brushes palette in Photoshop. Make sure the Brush tool (B) is selected and click on the small arrow in the top right-hand corner of the Brushes palette. Select Load Brushes to add the new brushes to your current list, or Replace Brushes to display just the new brushes. Click on the arrow and select Save Brushes if you want them to appear next time. And that's it!

Make sure you save the brush library in the correct place – the Photoshop/Presets/Brushes folder. And make sure it has the '.abr' extension.

Open the Brushes palette (Window > Brushes or F5). Click on the arrow and select Load Brushes to add the new brushes to your library.

ImagineNation Artist Q&A

Question

I'd like to create saleable images aimed at the children's market. Is there a certain formula that I should follow? *Asha Rudd, Ireland*

Answer
Philip replies

In many cases, art created for a younger audience will disregard many fine-art foundation rules. In addition to composition, perspective is another tool an artist can use to stylise forms. Exaggerated perspective is common in children's illustration and is an excellent way of pulling an image away from reality, adding that extra touch of style.

Value structure can be yet another powerful tool at your disposal. Since dark values or values with extreme contrast can appear scary or jarring to a young audience, many children's book illustrators will use a high key value structure with reduced contrast.

Once again, the artist can create his or her own set of rules for how value is applied within an

Notice how I'm playing with shape and form through the application of an animation technique called squash and stretch. The little curly Qs are another example of using a form as a theme to define style in an image.

image. Then there's colour. As a rule, it's used generously for children's content, with most palettes sitting within the primary and secondary colour families. I find triadic and complementary colour schemes work very well.

All of the fundamentals mentioned above are pieces to an overall puzzle that, when completed, should define a distinctive, exciting, and fun style of illustration that speaks to a younger audience. It's fascinating to experiment with shape, form, colour and perspective to create an alternate reality that is unique to your own vision.

My illustration Enchanted Evening was created as part of my children's series, Secret Places. Here I've skewed all the basic fundamentals in illustration to create a style that is unique and kid-friendly.

Coming
next month
Our artists answer
your questions on
Designing cute-looking animal
Making images look less digita
Creating custom brushe

Question

I want to design some vampire characters, but I don't want to do something that's been done many times before. *Dan Malcolm, England*

Answer

Francis replies

Because vampires are such a well-known element of pop culture, you have the benefit of a built-in shared visual vocabulary. Visual cues such as pale or white skin, fangs, blood, and related items such as stakes, bats or crucifixes also help to convey the idea. I'm working on a piece now that puts a spin on this recognisable formula. The character is a vampire who hunts monsters in modern-day Eastern Europe. I wanted to combine some of the modern body modification culture with the typical vampire physical cues.

For this piece specifically, the vampire cues I am using are primarily pale skin and blood imagery. I've chosen mostly dark clothing that provides a strong contrast to the pallor of the flesh tones, and the colourful tattoos help in the same way. The blood splatter on the wall acts as a design element, hinting at wings. This isn't exactly a part of the character design per se, but it is a sort of visual cheat that helps the idea along.

A modern interpretation of the classic vampire character design, combining traditional vampire design cues with modern cultural influences.

Step-by-step Designing a vampire character with a twist

1 This is the initial gesture/line drawing. I've already figured out the main design components – vampire plus body-mod punk girl. Most of the personality or first-read elements should come through in this step – the finer details can be added later.

2 In this step, I'm figuring out how the large scale graphic reads – since part of my strategy for conveying the vampire idea depends on showing pale skin, I design the character's clothing accordingly, so that plenty of her skin is visible.

3 Now the piece is almost finished. A simple texture and graphic treatment for the background establishes a bit of context, setting up an urban location, and provides an opportunity to create the bloody bat wing design on the wall. ●

Dave McKean

"The emotion in an image usually tells me what I have to do."

A glimpse into the mind of Dave McKean

THE KING OF STAFFS
*The King of Staffs is part of Dave's Particle
Tarot series, published by ASFA/Hourglass.*

Asked about how he became an 'Artist', Dave McKean gives an interesting preface to his answer: "I've never thought of myself as an 'Artist'," he says. It's not so much the art that worries him, it's the capital A – it seems to claim too much, even for the man behind comic book legends including Sandman and Violent Cases.

"I draw and paint, make photographs, films and music, and I write occasionally." But he's not an 'Artist'. For Dave, that lofty title is reserved for the likes of Pablo Picasso, Max Ernst and Francis Bacon. "They created the language that I, and hundreds of others, try to use."
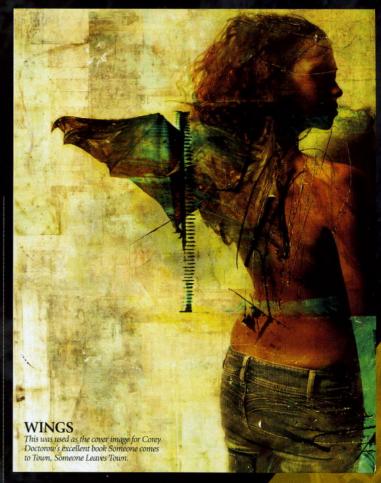
Dave's ambition is to make those languages come alive, to tell stories and to investigate experience. "I'm happy using these established ways of making images and pushing them," he says. "Applying them to storytelling, and using them to explain and explore my interests."

GAINING SOME KIND OF FOUNDATION

Dave grew up in a village several miles from Maidenhead, a place, which is, in turn, some miles from London. His dad was an important early influence: "My dad wasn't a professional illustrator, but he could draw, and entertained me by drawing caricatures and cartoons."

But sadly, this was to be a short-lived influence. "He was stuck in a job that he was very good at, came with great responsibility for a large staff, but which utterly stifled any creativity in him, and ultimately killed him I think." There's nothing like stress and frustration to shorten the natural life span. "This lesson I learned when I was 12."

Before this: "We went to the Tate, and I got to see Max Ernst's paintings for the first time, these left a big impression." Dave follows this melancholic tone with a flash of colour, "I loved all the stuff boys love." That meant comics, "especially American comics, the weirder the better." It also meant film, especially horror and sci-fi. This love extended to illustrations for magazines including Amazing Stories and later, New Worlds. For a while Patrick Woodroffe, Roger Dean, Philip Castle and Chris Foss all helped shape young Dave's imagination, "And much of this stuff has settled in my brain as some sort of foundation."

MUSICAL YOUTH

Although life in Maidenhead wasn't hugely fast-pacedl, Dave had music to keep him company. An accomplished pianist, "I played keyboards in various jazz-rock bands around the area, so we played at the Bracknell Jazz Festival." An event, which, for no good reason, conjures up images of hipsters smoking woodbines by an orangey lantern light.

Dave had narrowed his direction down to two things: art or music. "So I went to art school and assumed I

WINGS
This was used as the cover image for Corey Doctorow's excellent book Someone comes to Town, Someone Leaves Town.

Artist PROFILE

Dave McKean

Born in Maidenhead in 1963, Dave is an illustrator, painter, writer, film director and all-round creative dynamo. An accomplished jazz pianist, Dave produces images of a world where freeform jazz makes perfect sense and all the animals talk with a strange accent. Well known for his work with author Neil Gaiman, the two collaborated most recently on the film Mirrormask.

➤➤ could keep on playing in clubs until the early hours and still get into college by 9am with my brain intact." Not surprisingly, that didn't work out: "Music took a back seat, and has become my private therapy."

Maybe it is in the 'back seat', but from its place there Dave's love of music offers a constant reprieve: "It's been great to start working with film, mostly because I've rediscovered sound and music. Some of my best recent creative experiences have been putting the soundtracks together for my short films."

LESSONS LEARNED

Dave studied at the Berkshire College of Art and Design. In his four years there, one lesson stands out as being the toughest: "The hardest lesson was just to open up. To listen. To look out into the world and try to be receptive." We're so used to building defences against the world, it can be hard to take an honest look. But the rewards are plentiful: "As soon as I lowered my guard, a whole world of extraordinary work flooded in."

For this Dave has his teachers to thank: "Malcolm Hatton, who taught design, but also ran a company and gave me real work, with real briefs and deadlines; Jim Kane, who brought a hard professionalism to the course; George Glenny, who was my chaotic, inspiring drawing and semiotics teacher." The best lessons were, Dave confesses, conducted over a pint.

The biggest advance during those college days though was one of paradigm: "From the world of the literal to that of the abstract." Ralph Steadman opened the door a chink and after him came the likes of Jim Dine, Egon Schiele, Edgar Degas. And then came a realisation: "That this was the unique element in drawing. Paint as a painter, not trying to be photographic, or realistic, but just beautifully painterly."

WORTH EXPLORING

Having come to know these great artists and illustrators, it was time to

THE TEN OF CUPS
This is another image taken from Dave's Particle Tarot series, from the Minor Arcana. A fascinating interpretation of an ancient tradition.

part company again: "Matt Mahurin, Marshall Arisman, Bill Sienkiewicz, Russell Mills; all had to go if I was ever to find my own voice."

"I've always been interested in ideas more than technique." This, says Dave, goes back to George Glenny, "Before drawing anything we had to have a clear idea of what we were trying to achieve." This involved writing a personal brief: "So to this day, I still write personal briefs for myself. I still need to be clear in my own mind what I'm doing."

This may explain some of the depth which characterises Dave's work. "Techniques may change and go in and out of fashion, but ideas are always worth exploring and re-interpreting," he adds. If your gaze is rewarded with more than reflected light, if that reflected light is carrying
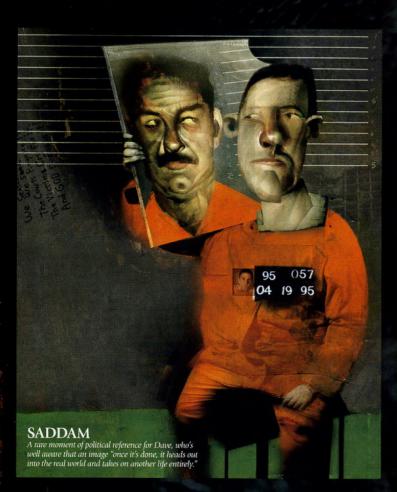
ideas with it, you have something special going on.

BORDERLINE

Some of Dave's best-known work has been created in tandem with long-time collaborator Neil Gaiman. The two first met in London in the mid 1980s, while working on a magazine called Borderline. "Neil was writing two stories, I was writing and drawing two, a period detective story called The Fox, and a thriller road movie story called Going to California."

Borderline turned out to be a time-waster but, "Neil had written a story called Violent Cases, and we'd become friends." So the two hooked up, and while Borderline crashed and burned, Violent Cases was already in production for Escape, and was later published by Titan Books.   ➤➤

SADDAM
A rare moment of political reference for Dave, who's well aware that an image "once it's done, it heads out into the real world and takes on another life entirely."

> **I've always been interested in ideas more than technique. So this day I still write personal briefs for myself. I still need to be clear in my mind what I'm doing**

QUEEN FROM MIRRORMASK
Mirrormask was Dave's first film with Neil Gaiman, vision of a dark fairytale, brought to life with the help of the Jim Henson Company.

MIRRORMASK
Moving from page to screen is not without its difficulties...

Directed by Dave McKean, co-written with Neil Gaiman and produced in tandem with the Jim Henson Company, Mirrormask brings the strange alternative universe of Dave's graphic work to the silver screen.

A through-the-looking-glass journey for both characters and their creators, the project wasn't without its trials says Dave: "Certainly there were many enjoyable bits, some great people to work with, I learned a lot, and a lot of great things have come out of it." That said: "It was slog to make."

That the project actually got off the ground was a surprise, "We were constantly fighting technical problems, drives failing, render software not working, electricity supply melting, lots of boring, painful technical rubbish." And as always with independent productions, the money was tight: "So we couldn't buy our way out of the problems."

Like a true artist (note the small 'a') Dave is far from satisfied with the final thing: "I like bits of it, but generally I think its weaknesses are obvious." Fortunately, he's not been totally sworn off the celluloid and is working on a new screenplay: "Signal To Noise will hopefully be the next film."

SCENES FROM MIRRORMASK
More of the strange characters and environments of Mirrormask. "I like bits of it," says Dave of the film.

DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY

"I use the growing family of computers in my studio for everything"

Dave McKean's work always has depth and texture to it, the kind of feel that suggests a traditional background, yet he's a dedicated Mac user.

The raw materials are usually analogue however: "I still make physical things, drawings, paintings, objects, photographs, but then scan everything and create the final images in the machine." It's a process that is gradually gaining acceptance and may one day stand alongside paint brushes and canvas as an accepted medium.

It has creative advantages too: "I keep finding things in the process that surprise me." Dave gives an example: "If you overlay an image with a copy of itself that has been compressed, then really force the levels, you start to see the differences – the JPG compression artefacts."

The fun doesn't stop there: "If you start to play with these, all sorts of amazing patterns and colours appear." The possibilities are truly endless, but what always keeps them coming back is the flexibility: "Mostly, I'm still using the Mac for its ability to control the final image and design."

QUEEN PEN

Dave's work frequently makes use of a co technique. "These days everything gets sca in, and combines into the final im

SURGEONS
This painting shows Dave's ability to shine a light in the darker corners of everyday life.

FLY
Proving that we should all be wary of anyone with one of those hats…

Dave McKean's
VITAL STATISTICS
Dreaming of flying – and relaxing

Date of birth
29 December 1963

Current location
South Kent, England

Favourite music
Almost anything. I'm not too big on mainstream poppy rocky stuff, but almost anything from modern orchestral music to electronica, jazz, tango, Balkan, African, ambient, Eastern, you name it. At the moment I really love Anouar Brahem.

Favourite traditional artist
I guess Francis Bacon for painting, Egon Schiele for drawing, Pablo Picasso for restless nature.

Favourite digital artist
That's a tricky one. I think I would say Chris Landreth for his film Ryan. one of the most beautiful uses of digital tools I've ever seen, and simply a lovely film.

First memory
Standing in a large square in Vienna, looking up and seeing an eagle. It was probably really a pigeon, but I remember it as an eagle.

Does anything keep you awake?
Time passing too damn quickly.

Average time spent on an image?
A day.

Super power you'd most like to have?
The ability to relax and enjoy life in the present moment. And flying, but I'd settle for the first one, and I'm working on it. It's harder than it sounds.

Is the truth out there?
No, it's in here.

The single most important piece of professional advice
Don't buy frozen, just make your own pizza base.

Left or right-handed
Right, but left if the drawing needs to look rubbish.

If you were an animal, what would you be?
Our cat.

➤➤ Neil wasn't one for letting the grass grow under his feet. He landed the two of them an interview with Dick Giordano and Karen Berger at DC Comics. "To this day," Dave admits, "I don't know whether we had a proper appointment to see them or whether it was just a Neil blag." Either way, the result was Black Orchid. "They were wonderfully full-on days in 1986-1989, and we never questioned it all too much. We both just worked flat out."

OUTSIDE LOOKING IN
By 1990, Dave had begun to realise he wasn't a perfect fit at DC: "I felt that I needed to create my own projects as well." It had been fun for a while, but now was the time to make a move: "So long as we lunatics were in charge of asylum I was happy to be an inmate, as soon as the guards regained control, I had to escape." In the end, Dave confesses, "I'm much happier on the outside looking in."

Following this theme, Dave proceeded with a number of influential projects through the 90s, notably Cages, a 10-issue graphic novel on the subject of creativity. There were also CD covers, books of photography and animation. They always had that outside-looking-in feel to them: "I'm not interested in stories about fairies and goblins because I'm just not a believer."

What strikes Dave as important is how we read the world. "I'm fascinated by the way the brain works, and the way we construct versions of the world for ourselves; belief systems, memories, interpretations." This goes on all the time, in our own heads, and we're very often unaware of the it: "There is so much weirdness about the world, and our place in it, already, I don't see the need to create all the supernatural stuff."

MODUS OPERANDI
Since the McKean approach is cerebral: "Each job, or personal project, is different and needs its own solution." But he's a great believer in method: "I always sketch ideas in notebooks, I need to draw things on paper first. I always try and be clear about what I'm trying to say, and make sure the image at least opens a door to possible interpretations."

This isn't deliberate David Lynch style obscurantism on Dave's part: "I don't want to make images that need an accompanying book of solutions to the puzzle. I prefer images that are, to a large degree, self-explanatory." It's important for the opening statement to be clear: "After that, the image dictates what medium I use." And the meaning of the piece becomes a dialogue.

"Obviously, once it's done, it heads out into the real world and takes on another life entirely, but I need to make sure that foundations are strong and clearly thought through." On that basis, alternative solutions will be all the more profound. "I'm happy if there are elements that linger, and don't reveal themselves completely," concludes Dave. "I'm happy for there to be plenty of room for people to draw their own conclusions." ❂

Will Beck

Meet the winner of our first Reader Challenge

They were mainly felt tip pen-drawn battles, created with accompanying sound effects, on computer paper my dad brought home from the office," says Will Beck of his artistic upbringing. "Visiting art galleries, museums and stately homes and reading comics such as 2000 AD fed my imagination as well. I think hearing the BBC radio version of The Lord of the Rings was one of the earlier things that really fired my love for fantasy and myth before I'd even read the book."

Today Will is an aspiring illustrator, and winner of our first Reader Challenge for his New Horizons image. "I've been dedicating myself more and more to digital art for the last two or three years," he comments. "The reason I really wanted to explore digital painting was that it freed me from those worries and constraints I'd previously had about the completion of a final image – I often preferred my sketch work to the finished piece. It's really been in this last year, though, inspired by ImagineFX's arrival, that I've pushed my skills further and started to properly look at the amazing fantasy and sci-fi art that exists on the web."

SKETCHBOOKS

As a developing illustrator in a cut-throat world, Will is doing things the right way – building up a body of work and a raft of sketchbooks. He explains what these images and sketches are being populated with: "My head is full of ideas and images from stories, films, comics, newspapers, art, magazines, music, architecture and computer games, but I try not to just regurgitate these sources. Thematically, things I've come back to over the years have been Michael

Moorcock and Gene Wolfe-inspired fantasy adventure themes and gritty, often post-apocalypse sci-fi settings. There are many different subjects I still want to try, though."

SMALL BEGINNINGS

He describes his working process: "Often a picture will start from a thumbnail doodle in my sketchbook from my imagination. I'll then see what relevant reference I have in books, magazine cuttings or photographs I'd taken that can help me depict the idea. If the concept is still fairly vague at this stage, I'll brainstorm ideas or write a paragraph of a story to flesh it out. Then, depending on the nature of the image, I'll draw and draw compositions and character designs on paper in a quick and scribbly fashion until things are really gelling together and the thoughts behind the picture are strong enough. I'll then scan one of these sketches to use as the canvas of an image."

For Will, it's a question of when you want to make those initial design decisions: on paper or on the screen. "I've found it's quicker for me to use pencil and paper with the occasional ink or watercolour washes at the start," he says. "The way I use a computer basically follows my traditional art habits – that is broad colours, followed by colour washes to create form, then highlights, and then re-drawing back over."

Will's list of favourite artists reads like a Who's Who of fantasy, with Ryan Church, Feng Zhu, Dave McKean, Brian Froud, Alan Lee, Ray Harryhausen and Rodney Matthews all getting a mention.

We leave Will as he prepares to complete his workshop for this very issue of ImagineFX – and you can see, and try out, the result on page 94.

Artist PROFILE

Will Beck

Aspiring illustrator Will Beck is based in the UK. He has always believed his drawings would naturally transfer to the digital arena, and has been developing skills in Painter and other apps. ImagineFX is his first client.
EMAIL: will_beck@tiscali.co.uk

STEAM PUNKS
"This is an early digital painting I did of a group of sinister underworld thugs as a little homage to the City of Lost Children film, and also inspired by Games Workshop's Necromunda game."

PLANAR ADVENTURERS
"These are characters I'd designed for the New Horizons picture and liked, but I wouldn't have had room on the flying boat. So I depicted them in a misty, flooded, ruined city fighting a hyper-evolved pre-Cambrian enemy." Will explains
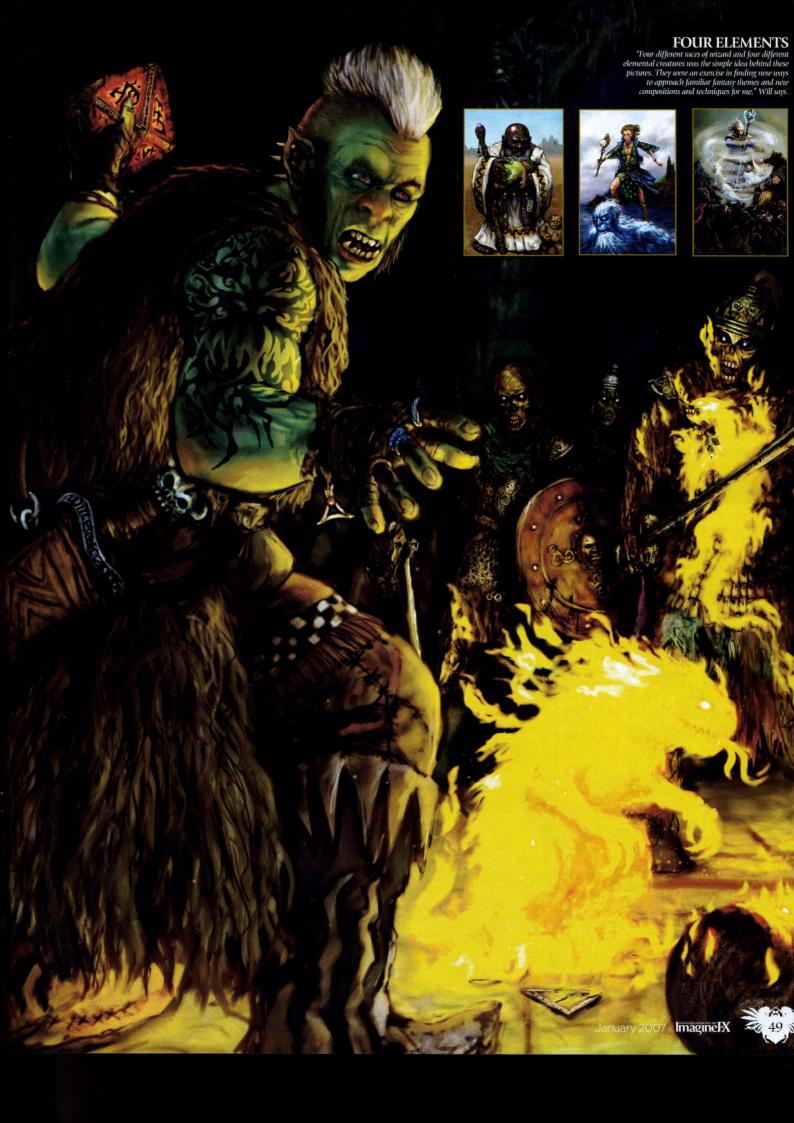
NEW HORIZONS
"This was my winning competition entry for the first ImagineFX Reader Challenge," says Will. "Basically, I wanted to show a sense of anticipation but leave the actual destination of the characters and the horizon itself to the imagination of the viewer. They're a piratical owl man, mad twin wizards, a fighter lady, a strange helmsman, a travelling scholar and a slightly futuristic knight."

FOUR ELEMENTS

"Four different races of wizard and four different elemental creatures was the simple idea behind these pictures. They were an exercise in finding new ways to approach familiar fantasy themes and new compositions and techniques for me," Will says.

Sketchbook

REDBACK
One of the rough sketches for a novel cover, this illustrates Redback, who's an alluring and dangerous mercenary. She has platinum-coloured hair and beautiful, long legs, but hidden in the jungle during combat, she's more fatal than any beast of prey.

Kuang Hong

We delve into the sketchbook of the imaginative Chinese artist

Artist PROFILE

Kuang Hong

Kuang Hong is a 26-year-old art director for an online game company. Based in Beijing, Hong had a standard Chinese education, and didn't focus on art until university, where he taught himself to draw. A quick learner, as well as his day job, Hong now freelances as an illustrator for novels.
WEB: www.zemotion.net

This issue's sketchbook focuses on Chinese artist Kuang Hong, well known for his imaginative and futuristic illustrations. He has an obvious talent for creating characters: "When drawing them, I try to find their thoughts," he comments. The results speak for themselves: Hong's obvious empathy with his characters really brings them to life — he looks through their eyes.

It was in 2001 that Hong discovered Painter, although he admits he still likes to kick off his sketching using a traditional pencil and paper. Here, he talks us through some of his sketches.

If you know of an artist who should be featured in ImagineFX sketchbooks, email sketchbooks@imaginefx.com

WILD JASMINE
This character design has a futuristic feel. The technology part turned out a bit 'returning to the ancients' — especially the motor — but that's a personal taste and design style.

BRIDE OF LUCIFER
This was a request from a friend, who wanted a dark, sad story. I picked the idea of Hell's bride, a young woman wanting to atone for her dead lover and clear his name by sacrificing herself in his place.

JOURNEY
Bearing the disgrace of the clan's extermination and hoping to revive her tribe's hope, the daughter of the sorcerer and her pet set out on a perilous journey.

KULA
This is a fantasy subject illustration, although the space and matter are more on the surrealistic side. Due to time constraints, I didn't colour it.

SHADOW CITY
An early environmental concept. A hidden temple from another world. Lore says that praying in this temple can resolve disasters and misfortunes.

THE BASALT
A ninja girl with a Xuan Wu beast (an ancient beast in Chinese legends, an epithet for the tortoise) from her clan.

MONSTER
The monster has snail-like features and attacks mainly using the blades on its hands. It doesn't have thoughts and likes the smell of human blood.

Hong's obvious empathy with his characters brings them to life. He looks through their eyes.

SKY CASTLE
Part of an ancient, forgotten resembling something from the Middle Ages floats and break from the land. "Longing for t reminiscence of my Elysian f

MOON FIGHTER
Legend about a monster-hunter. He always sets out on moonlit nights, hunting all kinds of rare and foreign creatures.

ANCIENT TREE 2
Environmental practice. A
large, ancient tree that grows
in the middle of a lake.

REIMAGINED FX
A fearsome man-chimera – part devil, part angel, part sea serpent –
dominates Hong's dramatic reinterpretation of our logo. And we've made
it into a stunning transfer, free for you on this month's cover.

Artist PROFILE

David Levy

AGE: 33
COUNTRY: Canada

David began as a concept artist for video game companies. He is now a senior concept artist and has recently set up Steambot Studios with his friend and fellow IFX contributor BARonTiERi.
WEB: http://vyle-art.com

BALVYLE
A complicated scene is given dynamism and made easy to read thanks to David's loose, painterly style.

WORMHOLE B
Before designing strange crafts, David designed boats.
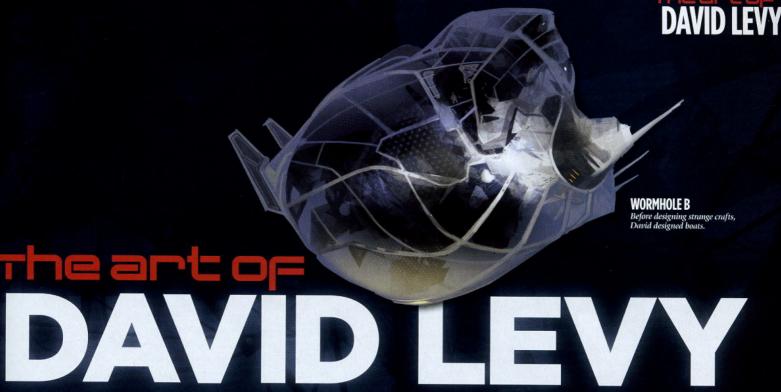
The art of
DAVID LEVY

"I wanted to create something that didn't exist yet, something different and original." The childhood urge that would lead to concept art...

David Levy has happy memories of growing up in the south of France: "It's very sunny all year long, warm, with a very nice coast," he smiles. "I spent most of my weekends on the beach, or sailing with my dad." The strange thing is that when you know this about David and you look at his artwork, it makes perfect sense. You can feel the sunlight and fresh air. There's a strong feeling of 'goodness' coming through.

"My grandfather used to draw a lot, and I saw him as a hero," David recalls. "He built roads in the desert, ski-jumped and was a flower geneticist, while staying very humble. He was a real inspiration for me, and drawing was part of it." The first creature David drew was the monster from the movie Legends.

Now leading work on a new sci-fi MMO for SpaceTime Studios in Austin, Texas, David feels he's finally in a position to do what he's always dreamed of – "creating a whole universe and all the creatures living within it". It sounds like a grand scheme, but he continues to retain his humility. "It's the most challenging project I've ever worked on," he says, "but it's also the most rewarding."

INSPIRE ME

Japanese animation was an important early influence, and one you can still see echoes of in David's work. But by the age of 11, a nautical theme had also begun to make itself felt. "At that time I wanted to become a naval architect," he explains. "So I started drawing and creating blueprints of hundreds of sailing boats."

That sounds like hard work for a pre-teen, but David was smitten. "Then later it became more about windsurfing and cars; I drew hundreds of those, too. I think what was always more attractive to me was to create something that didn't exist yet, something different and original." Between blueprints of original creations and weekends at the beach, a pattern was beginning to emerge. "I found a real pleasure in inventing," he recalls.

These weren't half-baked plans either: "I always had a ton of very 'serious projects', such as a revolutionary sailboat," says David. "And I'd create everything, from the company's logo to the whole set of sails." Most youngsters would have given up soon after they'd had the idea, but not this one.

"Anything that was related to flying or space was on my list as well," David adds. His bedroom walls were covered with fluorescent stars, and his bookshelves ➤➤

HALLOWEEN A
"I think a lot of it has to do with not stopping curves or lines," says David of the elegance that is exhibited in his images.

➤➤ were filled with titles involving space exploration: "That became a great subject to inspire my drawing."

LIVING OFF PASSION

Although David had an excellent role model, the idea of making a living through art didn't seem a genuine possibility. "Until very late I didn't realise it could be anything more than having fun creating impossible stuff," he remembers. Inspired by comic books and movies, David just did what came naturally, putting pen to paper and making those ideas seem more real.

Then one day came a breakthrough. "I discovered that behind beautiful objects, hard-working artists were living off their passion," he explains. But still, "At the time I was a lazy kid, only interested in playing video games or spending my days on the beach, windsurfing…" Young David needed more convincing, and this time Mum came to the rescue, virtually forcing her son to enter an art school test.

STRUCTURED THOUGHTS

That audition did the trick. "It opened my eyes and I realised that I wasn't the only one with a passion," he recalls. "From then on, I decided to put all my energy into art." However, following his inventive tendencies, the direction he chose was a practical one – industrial design. Studying it was, says David, "a real

eye opener". Before then he hadn't really grasped that work needn't be a burden, "Going every day to work and being passionate sounded like heaven to me – and you could even earn money!" he enthuses. As a discipline, design opened up a world of possibilities for David. "Also, it gave me what probably was and still is the most important thing to me – a structured thought process."

The thing about industrial design is that you can't just jump into creating something without a structure; you have to have a plan. "What's called the 'creative process' is the same for *anything* you create," David explains. "Always start with a sketch," he advises. "It's almost like a magic trick. Whatever you do, however complex it is, it always works!"

Naturally, sketches vary in complexity. "The sketches you'll need to create a toothbrush are probably less complex than the ones you'll need to build an aircraft carrier," he notes, "but the process stays the same." David is scathing of the idea that there's a magical shortcut to talent. "There are no fast tricks to make your art better," he insists. "The solution is elsewhere: it's all about time and process." Accepting those conditions is the key to progress.

GAME ON

David wasn't destined to be a product designer. One day, while studying

architecture in Holland, he happened to catch a TV show about a Parisian game studio. "Oddly enough, I was talking to one of my best friends on the phone a few days later," he remembers. "It turned out he was working for the same company!" Regular readers will probably recognise the name: "It was BARonTiERi."

Right away, it was clear to David that games were going to become increasingly important. "I realised then, there was a ➤➤

> ❝ The creative process is the same for anything. Always start with a sketch. It's almost like a magic trick. Whatever you do, it always works! ❞

MOUNTSHIP A
David's sense of scale and solidity have benefited from his study of architecture and industrial design.

artist tip

BEWARE OF LAZY SHORTCUTS

Do not use shortcuts that turn you into a lazy artist: Using too much photography, use of the same perspective angle, and other easy ways have a tendency to slow down your brain. Constant practice and exercise makes for more flexible concept artists. But I still think using references is necessary to keep your creativity filled with different shapes, colours and lightings.

INSECTIVIBE A
Insectoid machines are a firm Levy favourite.

DAVID LEVY'S
PROJECT FOCUS

One fearsome Persian warrior and make it snappy!

The list of artists who'd already worked on Prince of Persia was impressive: Sparth, Hydropix, Pat Lambert... "Arriving on such a big project, there's this mixed feeling of satisfaction and fear," says David. Towards the end of production the art director came to David with an urgent – "like usual!" – request. "They needed a 'Persian' but also fantastic type character." A massive looking soldier but something that would fit with Lambert's fabulous character designs for the series.

"Combining a good design for production, an expressive pose and enough details for the texture artists is a very tricky job," David notes. It's too easy to get engulfed in your painting and forget your ultimate purpose: to serve production. "I remember redoing the original sketch for the character quite few times, to get the proportion right – it needed to be massive but not clumsy looking."

To exaggerate the dynamic nature of the image, David also wanted to push the perspective by "using the blade weapon as a main point of interest to drive the viewer into the picture." Finding a motif for the robe that would be coloured but not cheesy looking was another challenge. Fortunately, David was more than equal to it.

VIAGER A
David's work combines an understanding of human form and the structures we may one day build.

PILOT AI
A warm-up shows David's ability to express complex emotions concisely.

DAVID LEVY'S
artist tip

TECHNICAL SHORT CUTS

I find that using technical shortcuts is very handy. I constantly assign 'monkey-work' tasks to shortcut keys. For example: image flipping, rotations, layer creation... It makes for faster and less cluttered work. Doing that means you spend much more time on what is really important, which is creating great images.

BARON MAFIA
A clever use of depth and pose injects David's work with immediate character.

LIGHTER AIR
Scale is a brilliant tool for inject a sense of drama into a painti

➤ good chance that this medium would become the main entertainment of the future." Going into games offered a way to tell stories and create worlds. "The fact that I'd been a console addict for many years influenced my choice too," he adds.

Already passionate about movies, David believed that a similar process of creation could be applied to games, creating a natural place for the concept artist. "Looking at it now," he says, "I was right, but I think it took 11 years for the industry to understand it." Those early jobs weren't ideal, but you get out what you put in. "Working in a bad spot will teach you the most important thing: we are extremely lucky working as concept artists."

BEAUTIFUL CURVES

The films and books that David loved had a clear theme running through them: "Obviously Star Wars was a big influence, but it went further than that. As a kid I really wanted to become an astronaut, or a test pilot (I still do!), so any book I could read on the subject I jumped on."

Thanks to the writings of Isaac Asimov, Theodore Sturgeon and Ray Bradbury, and movies such as 2001 and Blade Runner, "I

was hooked," he says. And when David wasn't getting goggle-eyed at the vastness of space, his older sister was subjecting him to another type of classic. "She always took great pleasure in forcing me to watch horror movies like Alien, which totally traumatised me, and gave me nightmares for months," David grins.

As he explored his need to invent, these earlier influences have been supplemented with a more general love of creative space and structure. "Like other artists such as Sparth," he says, "I'm extremely inspired by modern architects, Frank O Gehry being one of them, but also Lebbeus Wood and Calatrava. They've mastered the modelling of environments and spaces through beautiful curves." Studying these masters of human space gives David tools with which to generate believable alternatives. "Using curves helps a lot in the reading of an image," he explains. "It helps the eye flow, and a less aggressive image tends to please people more."

LEAVING IT LOOSE

David continues to apply these architectural lessons to elegantly far-fetched visions of deranged creatures, gravity-defying

SPEEDPAINTING DEMON
A member of the Steambot studios, David keeps his freelance options open.

spacecraft and mythical places. "I think a lot of it has to do with not stopping curves or lines," he says of his style. "I try not to be too 'tight' with my paintings, and even though I stay loose, the high resolution helps achieve a 'detailed' look."

It's interesting to note that David keeps his approach free-flowing but doesn't insist on an analogue approach. "There was a time I would scan drawings, but then I'd spend more time cleaning the pencil stuff than actually polishing the painting," he explains. On top of this, when time is production-critical, staying entirely digital speeds up the process tremendously. "When you see Dan Milligan drawing on a computer, you have no doubts about staying digital all the way."

In the end, he feels, it's down to personal choice: all you have to do is be comfortable. "For example, I don't like painting on smaller Wacoms," he says, "because I think the movement should come from your arm and not your wrist."

Understanding your own needs is half the key. The rest is practice. "When I go back to painting after a period with less work, I find it extremely painful to get back in the same rhythm," David reveals. "It feels like starting a train: difficult at first and then momentum helps."

Once it's moving, though, you just want to climb on board… ●

DAVID LEVY'S VITAL STATISTICS

Age
33.

Current location
Austin, Texas.

Favourite music
From Mozart to Bad Religion, and Lounge-Radio.com.

Favourite traditional artist
Klimt, Moebius.

Favourite digital artist
Sparth/Mullins.

First memory
Smashing my front teeth falling from a roundabout.

Average time per image
Anywhere between 20 minutes and 20 hours.

Superpower you'd most like to have?
The ability to fly.

Does anything keep you awake at night?
Painting without noticing time passing by. Like being in a meditative state.

Is the truth out there?
It most definitely is, but I haven't found it yet (although I am searching very hard).
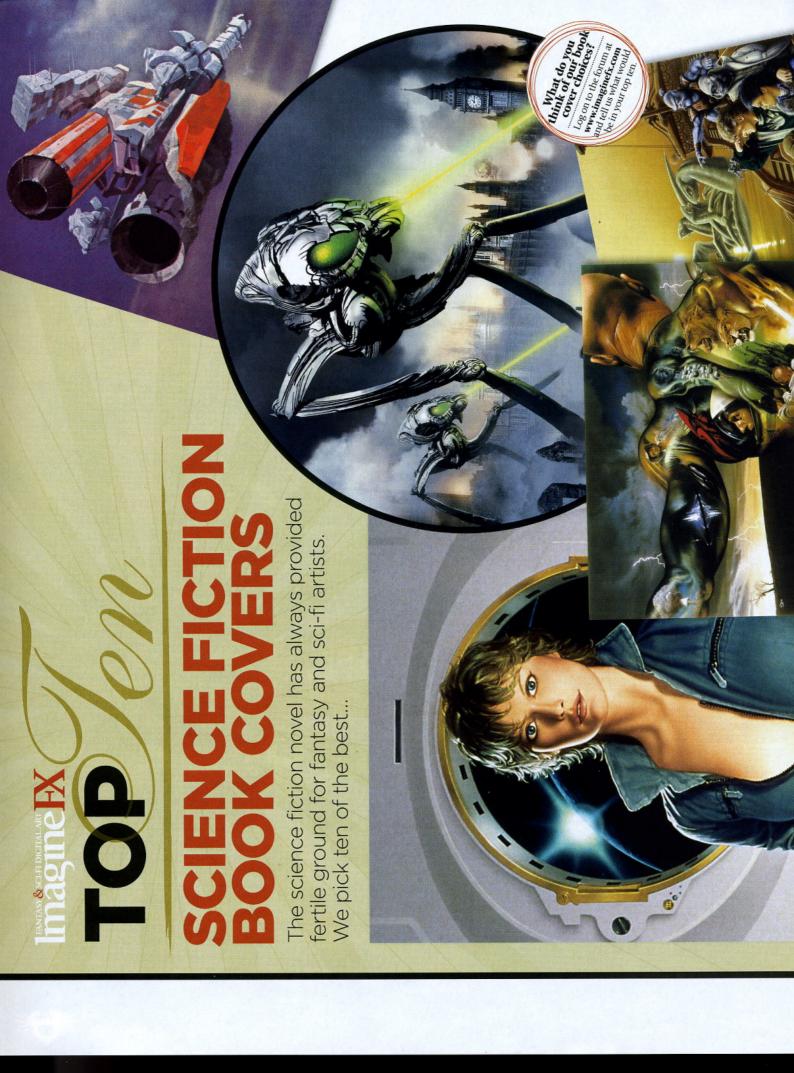
Single most important piece of professional advice
Paint more.

Left or right-handed
Right-handed.

If you were an animal, what would you be?
Anything flying or swimming in a gracious manner (do I sound like a new-age guru yet?).

workshop DRAMATIC CONCEPT ART

In this five-page workshop, David Levy explains how to paint a piece that's full of drama, by using custom brushes to create this image of nuclear winter.

TOP *Ten*

SCIENCE FICTION BOOK COVERS

The science fiction novel has always provided fertile ground for fantasy and sci-fi artists. We pick ten of the best...

8 VALENTINE PONTIFEX

Sci-fi and fantasy come together in Robert Silverberg's Majipoor series, set on a world where humans live alongside a number of other species. This mix is beautifully captured in the painting of Jim Burns. Rich colours illustrate a world that is inhabited by humans, but is at the same time totally alien. Jim Burns says: "My approach to book illustration has always been to give as truthful a 'narrative snapshot' of the story as possible."

6 2010: ODYSSEY TWO

Set nine years after the original book and film, 2010 was also filmed and introduced a whole new audience to Arthur C Clarke's work. Michael Whelan says of his jacket artwork from the UK first edition in 1982: "The publishers were looking for a 'big book look' for the cover. I came up with 12 different concepts until they found one they liked and this painting was the result."

3 THE STARS MY DESTINATION

Remarkable in its vision, Alfred Bester's book, first published in 1956, pre-dates the cyberpunk movement by decades but carries many of its traits, including mega-corporations and augmented humans. Chris Moore's cover is the perfect realisation of the idea of humans becoming disenfranchised with their world. The central character is disjointed but at the same time a survivor; Moore's cover is equally striking and thoughtful.

9 FRIDAY

Friday is a typical Robert A Heinlein novel, which features a very individual and charismatic central character. Michael Whelan's artwork perfectly evokes her. "Several symbolic elements relating to the story are built into the painting," he explains. "The zipper pulls on the jumpsuit, for example, are deliberately phallic in shape, a hint at her sexuality."

7 THE WAR OF THE WORLDS

HG Wells is one of the fathers of science fiction, and Dominic Harman's cover for this Penguin edition of his infamous novel captures its spirit superbly. "It was a dream commission to illustrate such a legendary story," Dominic recalls. "I started off with lots of pencil sketches to establish the look, then it was developed in Photoshop with the machines modelled in Bryce. It also incorporates photo reference and some freehand illustration to unify all the elements together. I made a special trip to London to get reference shots of Big Ben – I hope I did it justice."

5 DO ANDROIDS DREAM OF ELECTRIC SHEEP?

One of Philip K Dick's best-known works, partly because it provided the inspiration for the film Blade Runner. Chris Moore's artwork for this SF Masterworks edition pays homage to Ridley Scott's movie, using many of the motifs it contains, including the pyramid Tyrell building and flying car. It's the foreground figure, however, that gives the artwork its polish and provokes a feeling of being disjointed, which was a central theme that ran through many of Philip's novels.

4 THE STAINLESS STEEL RAT'S REVENGE

Jim Burns's painting for the second in Harry Harrison's Stainless Steel Rat series sees the anti-hero and protagonist Slippery Jim diGriz with his new wife, Angelina. A typically striking illustration, Jim is depicted as villain and hero. "The publishers let the painting for this cover do the work," says Jim.

10 THE ILLUSTRATED MAN

This collection of 18 short stories is a classic. Written by Ray Bradbury in 1951, the various scenes depicted on the illustrated man's body are a framework on to which each unrelated story is hung. The illustration by Jim Burns perfectly captures the essence of the collection. Says Jim: "Bantam's Spectra imprint of The Illustrated Man is more heavily 'designed' – but in my opinion to great effect. It lends the cover a classy, upmarket feel (for a paperback anyway). And I like seeing my name in large letters on the back cover!"

2 THE ROBOTS OF DAWN

Asimov's empathy towards the robots in his stories is beautifully encapsulated in this cover by Michael Whelan for The Robots of Dawn. Michael says: "In all the books Asimov uses trees as symbols of man's relationships. The robot's pose deliberately mimics a tree shape, and also casts his arms up where they will shield his eyes from the rising sun – an oblique reference to The Naked Sun."

1 THE FOUNDATION TRILOGY

Asimov's Foundation series actually spans ten books, but it's the first three that are considered classics of the 50s. The British artist Chris Foss became synonymous with Asimov, becoming his official cover artist throughout the 80s. "I sat down with the publisher's art editor, Steve Abis, who said why didn't I paint a triptych? The format is a bit o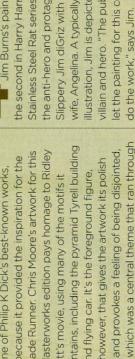dd as the usual formula for book covers was that I had two-thirds of the cover for the artwork with the rest for the title and so on. We persuaded Asimov to come over which is a rare thing because he never travelled. We had quite a bash and then presented the painting to him."

Artist portfolio

JOHN KEARNEY

A glimpse into the world of the former games industry artist, who isn't adver
to a bit of creative masochism to develop his considerable talents

ALIEN
John used many reptilian references to create this piece.

Talking to John Kearney, it's clear that John's somehow unearthed something remarkable within himself; a natural ability that has enabled him to create work that ranks alongside the very best fantasy art.

"I remember reading about the artist's 'First Fire'," he enthuses, "a sudden flash of inspiration that all artists experience at some point. It's a moment of crystal clarity and vision, a tantalising glimpse at something exceptional in your subconscious. Whatever it is, it's important to try to capture the essence of that intensified moment of perception by sketching down all you can before it's gone."

QUICK LEARNER

While this kind of inspirational epiphany might be a common stage in artists' development, what is unusual in the case of John is how quickly he has developed the associated technical skill to commit his visions to canvas. "Bizarre as it may sound now," he says, "before last year I'd never completed a 2D digital painting. I'd dabbled and messed about, but I never had the opportunity to take it further than that in a professional capacity."

Until a year ago, John had been employed full-time as a 3D texture artist in the games industry, which didn't offer him the opportunity for expression he needed. He describes it as "soul destroying."

"I completely lost all of my creativity and passion for the job," he says. "I started out like most young artists do, with a romantic vision of how great it would be to create art professionally. After realising how cynical and disillusioned I'd become, I quit my job and decided to go freelance as a 3D/2D artist to try and recapture my motivation."

Freed from the constraints of the 9-5, John set about developing his portfolio. He completed a number of paintings and posted them to the 2D art site ConceptArt. org, and quickly garnered praise.
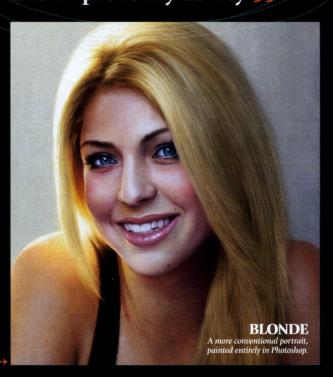
"I was unbelievably surprised by the support I received," he says. "I had offers of work almost immediately and it enabled me to continue expanding my portfolio and improving my ability at the same time."

It was through his work on ConceptArt that he came to the attention of this magazine, and he has become a regular contributor, a highlight of course being painting the stunning Beauty and Beast dual covers for issue 8.

John works primarily in Photoshop, though he dabbles with Painter occasionally. The hours he put in at his previous job using Photoshop have meant it has become second nature to him.

"I know it well enough to forget I'm actually using software when I'm painting,"

> " I had offers of work almost immediately, and it enabled me to expand my portfolio and improve my ability "

BLONDE
A more conventional portrait, painted entirely in Photoshop.

BIGFOOT
John used this in a Photoshop Q&A for ImagineFX about creating realistic snow.

> ❝ At no point do I have to stop and work out how to do something, which means I'm able to get into the flow and paint at my full potential ❞

➥ he explains. "It becomes like a pencil or a paintbrush, at no point do I have to stop and work out how to do something, which means I'm able to get into the flow and paint at my full potential."

Though the majority of his work is created digitally, John doesn't think the tools are all that important. "I feel I could do whatever I do digitally to a similar level with traditional media," he assures us. "It's crucial to improve your eye and judgement for any art related discipline, and digital is just another outlet for that fundamental ability."

NATURAL MEDIA

So while many Photoshop artists devote hours to creating their own custom brushes, John opts mainly for Photoshop's default Natural Media brush set and would rather try and paint details rather than let a snazzy brushes do the work.

To keep up the momentum, rather than slavishly working on a single, big project John often works on several paintings at the same time, using reference material for one, while another will be created entirely from his imagination.

"In the long run, I feel it's going to benefit me and improve my overall technical ability," he says. "I'm certainly not sure whether it's the best approach, but I don't really care – I feel it works for me and it's a personal challenge that motivates me."

John is self-taught for the most part and admits his formal education hasn't really been relevant to his eventual career path.

As part of his studies he undertook a placement at game studio Elite Systems and impressed by his portfolio, they offered him a job immediately. At the tender age of 18, John describes his move in to the world of work having been "a baptism of fire", but it was clearly a formative experience

"The professional experience I gathered through working full-time with other artists helped me immensely," he says. "There's nothing like milestones and deadlines to get your arse into gear."

Right now, John's happy working as a freelance illustrator, but would welcome returning to a full-time position should the right opportunity arise.

"I'd love to be part of an art team with a lot of potential and ability," he says. "Film work would also be of huge interest to me, designing creatures for the movies would be a dream come true.

"I'll keep my options open, continue doing the best work I can and see what arises. Whatever I do, I'm going to grasp it with both hands and see how far I can push myself." ●

BAR GIRL
A more loose style, created with hard-edged brushes.

QUEEN TRIFFIDIA

A tale of two covers, nine days and 70 hours...

In July 2006, John received a call from ImagineFX Art Editor Marcelo Furquim offering an ambitious commission, with an even more ambitious deadline. John accepted, and the idea for Queen Triffidia soon materialised. Working with Marcelo, John turned around the concept sketches for the then untitled image in a matter of days. John explains further, showing the investment each of the images needed.

"The paintings took me around 70 hours over nine days," he says. "The majority of the time was spent on detailing the paintings, which can feel like forever when working at large print resolutions. The most critical period is always the first two or three days when the concepts have to be nailed."

As for his favourite out of the two: "Definitely the monster version! The beautiful version might be just as aesthetically pleasing, but the real creativity and challenge came in designing the monster which had to look just as realistic and believable. Finding a balance between the quality of the cover images was imperative, otherwise it would have been a pointless exercise to offer readers a choice."

Your DVD

WELCOME TO THE

FANTASY & SCI-FI DIGITAL ART
ImagineFX
COMPANION DVD

To celebrate ImagineFX's first birthday we've got a jam-packed DVD awaiting you. You can find our second issue on this month's disc, alongside all the original workshop files. We also have free DAZ|3D and Dark Anvil models, a second exclusive rotatable Virtual Pose, speed painting videos by David Levy, and much, much more – phew!

There's another FXPosé filled with work from you, our talented readers, plus a fantastic selection of workshop files from Joel Carlo, David Levy, Jonny Duddle, Adam Benton, and our first Reader Challenge winner Will Beck.

These are all interactive, multi-layered files at print quality.

Until next time,

Tom

**Tom Rudderham,
DVD Editor**

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Phone: +44 (0) 1225 442244
DVD issues: support@futurenet.co.uk

David Levy speed painting videos
See workshop artist David Levy at work in these fantastic videos, inclu[...] material from The Gnomon Workshop

FXPosé interactive
The best reader artwork
Your latest works of art showcased in our gallery

Workshop files
Exclusive to ImagineFX
Follow this month's workshops with these high-resolution, multi-layered files

Full listing:

DEMO SOFTWARE
- ArtRage 2.2 (Mac and PC)
- Cinema 4D 10.0 (Mac and PC)
- Painter IX.5 (Mac and PC)
- Photoshop CS2 (Mac and PC)
- Poser 6 (Mac and PC)

RESOURCES AND EXTRAS
- ImagineFX issue 2
- Virtual Pose QTVR
- David Levy videos
- DAZ|3D models
- Dark Anvil model
- Free images
- Free textures
- Free wallpapers
- Q&A Files

WORKSHOP FILES
- More high-res, multi-layered artwork from professional digital artists. See individual workshop pages for files and folders

FANTASY & SCI-FI DIGITAL ART

ImagineFX
Workshops

The software and files you need to complete this month's workshops...

This issue:

68 Dramatic concept art
David Levy creates a piece that's full of drama using custom Photoshop brushes

84 The Unusual Suspects line-up
Jonny Duddle explains how a line-up can help you to size up your characters

74 Paint mythical beasts
The second part of Joel Carlo's anatomy workshop focuses on creating a creature

If your DVD is missing please consult your newsagent

Photoshop

DRAMATIC CONCEPT ART

Leading concept artist **David Levy** shows how to paint a piece that's full of drama, using custom brushes to create a nuclear winter image

Artist PROFILE

David Levy
COUNTRY: Canada
CLIENTS: Disney channel, Massive Black The Gnomon Workshop.

David began as a concept artist for video game companies. He is now a senior concept artist and has recently set up Steambot Studios with his friend BARonTiERi.
www.vyle-art.com

DVD Assets
The files you need are on the DVD
FOLDERS: Full screenshots
FILES: GNOMON_imagineFX.abr, blokFX_01.psd
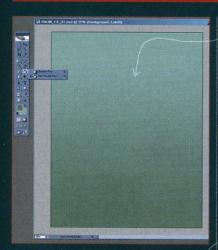SOFTWARE: Photoshop CS2 (demo)

Creating dramatic concept art means capturing the correct mood for your piece. The mood that I'm going to try to achieve in this workshop is one of a nuclear winter, which still has a poetic atmosphere to it. Opposing or contrasting ideas always make for great painting subjects, and a saturated winter is not a very common way to approach an image. With that rough idea and direction, we will let chaos direct the first part of the painting, then slowly give it a meaning and a more concrete perspective, lighting and mood.

For this workshop, I'll start using the same brushes I created for the Gnomon DVD From Speedpainting to Concept Art, but will also create new variations using the Dual Brush settings.

Before starting this kind of exercise, it's important to have a good knowledge of perspective, composition and lighting. Without these basics, speed painting can be frustrating: speed and technique only come with practice. Nevertheless, there are rules that make the job easier, and 'atmospheric perspective' is one of them. In most environments (aside from space), the atmosphere acts as a filter

and creates a hierarchy in contrasts. I'll use that rule to emphasise the atmosphere in my painting. I'll try to imagine what a somewhat sad mood mixed with a futuristic design might look like.

The Dual Brush feature will help me create elegant shapes that will disappear in the depth of the fog. The tools used might seem complex, but their use is based on classical painting techniques. I'm going to overlay colours, starting from the background, slowly moving forward and finish close to the viewer's eye, as a painter using oils might do.
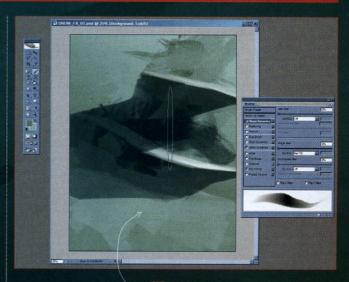
1 Background
Let's start with a medium green gradient from top to bottom of the image. I decide to keep the brightest area on the top, which influences the way light will appear in the final image. At this point I have no clue how that painting will unfold in front of my eyes. One thing is sure, though: with a vertical composition, I have the possibility to create a large building in the background. You shouldn't be afraid as you begin your image; be relaxed and enjoy yourself.

2 Basic shapes
I try to let the brushes go free as much as possible: I know that I need some rocks, metal structure for the vessel, and some soft gradients for the nuclear snow. I don't even look at the page during this process, just let myself be surprised by the shapes. When I look, I can already see a foreground and a background shaping up. This happens thanks to the variation of opacity and contrasts giving the illusion of depth. I already sense that this off-axis composition could be something that plays to my advantage.

3 Shapes come to life
Using a Palette Knife brush I add two bold strokes of dark blue/green. Suddenly a large mass appears and textures are exaggerated during the shadowing process, giving a feeling that something high-tech might be lurking in the fog. The sharp edge on the right side reminds me of a vessel's prow. ➤➤
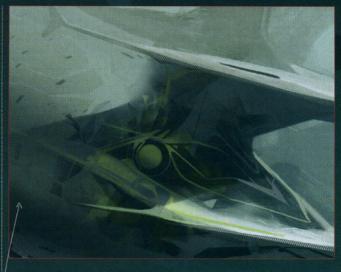
8 Adding scale

Time to give punch and scale to what is now seriously shaping up like some futuristic prow of a spacecraft carrier. On the top right part, I throw in some design markings to give a sense of perspective, and straighten the line so it looks like it has been man (or alien!) made. I repeat the same operation on the level underneath, making the shadow line more obvious. At the bottom I add two characters that will give and indication for the ship's scale.

9 Circle focus

As I said in step 6, I think the connecting circle will make a great focus, so I work on the materials in the shadowy area. The lighting effects give the illusion of an eerie, unknown reflective material. That highly saturated yellowish green seems to work well, and will help develop
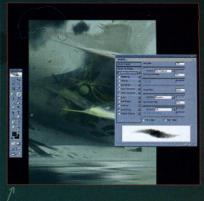
the texture of the ship further. I really dig into the pixels in a close-up, revealing a lot of blurriness/sharpness variation. That will probably have to be fixed later on during the polishing phase.

10 Texture

Working on the design of the texture feels different from the high adrenaline of trying to come up with shapes from chaos. The shapes come up by themselves, but I need to make sure I follow the overall volumes decided earlier on by the brushes and light gradients. I also have to be careful about
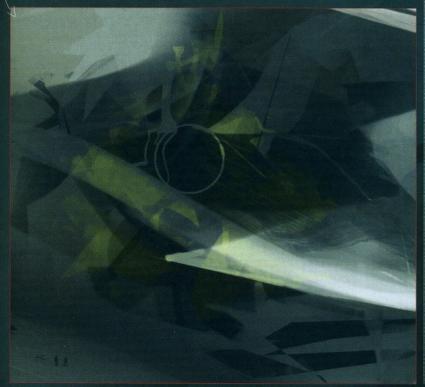
the shadow to light shifts that affect the materials. The shapes again seem to take a life on their own, and the circle now resembles the eye of a mystical whale.
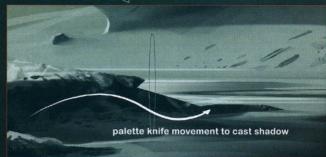
11 Whale image

I exaggerate the back of the ship, by making it resemble a stranded whale on that strange green snow. I also have some fun designing a pattern on the back of the mechanical beast. That helps reading the volume, and also makes the viewer believe that there might be much more there than what the eye can see. This is important: after all, if you detail everything, how can the viewer dream? I add clouds to the top left corner to play with the scale again, and also give a nice framing to the centre of the illustration.

12 Foreground in focus

It's time to think about the foreground. I need as much space as possible, to eventually add some characters to my scene and help the viewer jump into my image. A slab of snow-covered rock is an easy way to add depth and an instant foreground element. I also add some texturing designs at the front of that ship. Adding highlights where the ship and snow meet gives a nice indication of where the light falls. I flip the image over the vertical axis, and use the Palette Knife to gently cast a shadow on the side and underneath the rock.

> ## PRO SECRETS
> ### The importance of basics
> I have noticed on many occasions that many students tend to try to run before they can walk. Most of the digital tools that enable us to paint nowadays are extremely powerful, but one thing not to lose sight of is that a classical background will always make the difference. Even though you have a whole set of powerful digital tools, it is only by practising the basics that you will be able to use them to their full potential.

palette knife movement to cast shadow

close to the centre might become the viewer's main focal point.

7 Blowing snow

I add to those dark patches of texture, using the Selection tool and a newly created dual brush. I also decide to simulate radiosity underneath that mass with a soft but obvious dark airbrushed line. Close to the prow, I intensify the brightness as it gets closer to the bright snow. I decide to soften the snow/ice contact area using the airbrush again, to give it a feeling of blowing snow.

4 Perspective

Using the Selection tool and the Rock brush (from my set on your DVD) I decide to push the perspective by using rocks lying underneath the ice closer to the viewer. At the same time I make sure to exaggerate that off-axis composition, by opening that embryo of perspective like a fan from left to right. These rocks will help the eye flow from foreground to background, in a single and comfortable manner. I am starting to wonder how will I be able to balance this weird drop of composition to the right.

5 Fun with fog

I decide to have a bit more fun with the fog, and get the sides of that silhouette to disappear in the mist. I find the best way to balance the whole image is by layering at the bottom of the picture a nice, straight horizontal plane. The composition now feels more balanced, and that sharp edge on the right keeps looking more and more like a prow. I think it is about time to give a wash of reality to the rough sketch.

6 Connecting circle

I exaggerate that light coming from the right side, by sculpting some white cap-like shapes, and also adding a shine to that slab that I decide is ice, thanks to a soft/sharp reflection. I toy with the idea that the connecting circle I created in the middle of the more heavily textured area

13 Tiny ship

I decide to add another ship in the foreground as this craft's tiny proportions will emphasise the scale of the giant vessel even more. I use the colours already present in the painting with the colour picker, and I also add a very vibrant red so the image has a new point of focus, now slightly closer to us. I accentuate the light on the top right, and add details such as the landing gears and reactor. Then I cast the new ship's shadow on the ground.

14 Fresh eyes

I zoom out to check that the composition is working with this new element, and flip the image quite few times to keep my eyes fresh. This is probably a good time for me to take a break, go and get some coffee, as it's important to keep an objective view on your work, especially in a speed painting when things happen fast. At that point the speed painting is pretty much done. From now on, it is going to be much

more about polishing and sharpening the details. To give the piece more punch, I add a Multiply layer to the whole image. This enables me to slightly 'underexpose' my image, without losing detail.

15 Sculpting light

Now that the picture is darker, it's nice and easy to sculpt light on the sharp edges of the ship. The light coming from the top right, which cast shadows earlier on, helps me decide where to place those.

16 Add a figure

I add a character to the foreground to make sure the viewer's eye has a point of entrance to the picture, but also to keep that eye focused in the middle of the image. That rock ledge seems the best place. Maybe he is looking at some data on his computer or checking the view.

17 Add reflection

I zoom out a little bit to paint the icy shore and add the water reflection close to the camera. It is a nice trick to make the image even more three dimensional. Even though I used a long focal lens for the image, adding those foreground elements is what gives a strong feeling of perspective contrast with the background.

18 Final polishing

Now all that's left to do is to polish the image and do the final tidying up. I clean up the foreground rock by zooming very close and softening anything that might distract the viewer. This is the time to smooth things up using the airbrush, or add even more detail using the round brush.

19 Finished image

The image is finished. I managed to get the result I wanted, a dramatic image with a strange mood that has an alien beauty to it. The fact that the characters do not look like they have any sense of urgency helps confirm to the viewer that the scene is calm, if it was not for the gusts of wind that raise, from time to time, a cloud of toxic snow. ●

Photoshop
PAINTING MYTHICAL BEASTS

Using various anatomies from individual animal groups, **Joel Carlo** shows you a simple approach for creating your own creatures...

Artist PROFILE

Joel Carlo
COUNTRY: US
CLIENTS: The Ayzenberg Group, NASCAR, Dodge, Toyota and Fox Television

Joel has been a multimedia developer and freelance artist for more than 13 years, currently residing in Denver, Colorado.
www.joelcarlo.net

The first part of this workshop, in issue 12, saw us discussing the philosophy behind mixing animal anatomies to create fantasy creatures. We broke down and analysed each animal group to have a better understanding of which anatomies work best and also to isolate defining attributes that convey both physical and psychological characteristics. Using this information, I will guide you through a very straightforward approach for developing and creating your own fantasy creatures.

Before we get started, some basic ideas need to be established and considered. The foremost is, what type of creature are we trying to create? Remember, out of the countless mythological creatures that exist in folklore, each one carries a story to explain its origin. Each individual creature's history enables us to better understand how its personality and physical attributes came to be.

When creating your own fantasy creatures, you can really take this idea as far as you like. It can be extremely detailed or loose... it really boils down to the type of impression you would like your creature achieve.

The second part is determining what physical attributes will most define the idea you are trying to convey. Is your creature mentally or physically powerful? Is it a combination of both? What about it's environment? Is it aquatic or airborne? The characteristics you choose are an important part in developing your creature since they not only validate its origin, but also establish its look and overall cohesiveness.

For this workshop, I will be using Photoshop with a set of brushes created by IFX favourite Thierry Doizon, which you can get for yourself from www. barontierri.com. This brush set is also accompanied by a set of textures and are also made available as free downloads through his site. It is a set of very useful, well-rounded brushes and perfect for this workshop. Let's get started...

1 The sketch

In my mind, I wanted to create a sort of powerful and dangerously volatile jungle beast. The idea is to bring life to a creature that might have been used in African folklore to scare tribal children to sleep, similar to the way the Bogeyman has been used in the west. I put together a list of possible animals that would fit the characteristics I was looking for and settled on three major players: a lion, a gorilla, and an eagle. After playing around with a few different anatomical combinations, I decided on a creature that would contain the head of a lion, the torso of a gorilla, and the legs of an eagle.

2 Proportion and alignment

I normally prefer to create rough sketches in pencil and then scan them into Photoshop. After my sketch is scanned and cropped, I check it and correct any inconsistencies in proportions or alignment. What I'm looking for is overall

balance and I try to pick out areas that may look incorrect or cause problems later. For large adjustments, I will copy certain trouble areas using the Lasso tool and paste them in separate layers to modify individually. If certain areas require only minimal tweaking, I will use the Liquify tool under Filter > Liquify. This tool acts a lot like silly putty in that it enables you to stretch an area in small or large increments without any major loss in quality to your line work.

DIRECTIONAL LIGHT

RIM LIGHT

3 Preparing layers

Now I'm satisfied with the overall balance of my sketch, I set the layer blending mode to Multiply and adjust the levels to bump up the contrast so that I can see the line art a little easier. I then create a new layer for my background, placing this layer below my sketch layer, and choose a neutral grey colour for it. From here, I create another layer, this time between the background and sketch layers, which I will use to block in the base colour for the creature.

4 Blocking in colour

Using a mixture of the Round and Palette Knife brushes, I begin to block out colour over the entire image. At this point

I try to keep things loose and experiment with various colour combinations until I find something that catches my eye. I normally work with various brush opacities but tend to keep the opacity somewhere around 60 per cent, slowly building up the colour intensity with light, progressive brush strokes. As I progress through this colouring process, I am also aware of keeping a mindful eye of where the light and shadow areas are going to be.

5 Defining the light source

With my colour blocking complete, I now decide where I would like my light source to come from. I opt for a two-point

Shortcuts

Brush size

Decrease: [- (Mac & PC)
Increase:] - (Mac & PC)
Use the [and] keys
to adjust your brush size
with ease.

lighting scheme with a directional light as my main light source and a secondary light to create a rim light against the opposite edge of my creature. Because I've chosen a warm colour as the base colour for the creature, I choose a complementary colour for the rim light, which will help to add some nice contrast to the image.

6 Refining the creature

Here is where the fun really begins. With my light sources in place, I start blocking out the creature's form by defining my light and shadow areas. This is done by painting varies degrees of colour value in a separate layer. When I'm satisfied, I will flatten this layer on top of the original colour layer. Working on separate layers is a good habit to get used as it enables the flexibility to make adjustments and commit to them only when you are satisfied. If you make a mistake along the way, the layer can be erased without losing any of your previously saved work. Next, I use several brushes to work up detail along the way. I find that the Round and Palette Knife brushes are the most useful for blocking out shapes, while the Spackle brushes are excellent for texturing and adding slight variations to surfaces.

PRO SECRETS

Using reference

Good references can be an important part of creating an illustration. While imagination is important, using references enables you to see a subject in full detail and can serve as useful guidelines when creating your work. I usually keep a folder on my computer filled with various references that I've collected for each illustration I've created. Keeping a reference folder can be extremely handy and can save you the headache of looking for a suitable reference when time is limited.

that area. I do the exact opposite for areas that lack definition with additional brush work until I'm satisfied. With final detailing out of the way, I flatten the image and go over any areas that may need lightening or darkening using the Burn and Dodge tools. If any final level adjustments are needed, I will use Curves, found in the Image drop-down under Adjustments>Curves.

7 Adjustments

At this point, I take a step back and evaluate my progress. I study the image closely, checking for areas that could have been developed better and make any necessary adjustments as I fit. Playing around with the image, I decided to put in a set of horns and a reptilian tail to see whether it would add or take away from the creature's overall appearance. As I stated in the first part of this workshop, some care should be taken when combining anatomies in order to add to a creature's general cohesiveness. In this case, I feel both the horns and tail added a bit of balance and character to the creature that wasn't there before, so I decide to keep them.

8 Checking for distortion and balance

As well as flipping the canvas to evaluate your image from a different perspective, other good habits for a digital artist, which can help you check for distortion and balance, are shrinking your canvas to the size of a thumbnail which enables you to better judge the image's readability, and desaturating the image to check your value range.

9 Final touches

Giving the image a final once-over, I pick out any areas that are over-developed or under-developed. If there is too much detail in one specific place, I will use the Smudge tool to lightly soften

Shortcuts
Speedy zoom
Ctrl+[+] , Ctrl+[-] (PC)
Cmd+[+] , Cmd+[-](Mac)
Use this to zoom in and out of your image without using the magnifying tool

10 Conclusion

I hope this workshop has been informative or at least reassured you that there is no limit to the number of conceivable variations available when creating your own fantasy creatures. All it takes is a little patience, and a healthy dose of imagination.

Artist insight
DRAWING AND PAINTING DRAGONS

James Strehle gives you tips to help you create that mystical beast you have lurking in your mind!

Artist PROFILE

James Strehle
COUNTRY: US
CLIENTS: Paradise Arts, Chemical 7, plus many private commissions

James is fresh out of the Art Institute of Boston with a degree in animation/Illustration. He's already begun to make his mark in the art scene. He is currently working as a freelance illustrator where he is involved in many different projects.
www.jamiestrehle.com

Dragons are the fire-breathing icons of the fantasy world. They are majestic and powerful beasts that have captured the minds of writers and artists all over the world. The legends and myths of the dragons have been around for eons and from them there have emerged countless variations of the dragon theme from cultures around the globe. I'm going to narrow it down to the traditional European idea of dragons to make this discussion more manageable. I will give tips on the conceptual stages, through sketching and inspirations, and I will also try to help you push through mental blocks and give advice on dragon anatomy.

1 A GOOD CONCEPT

First and foremost, make sure you have a good concept. Come up with one or a few features your dragon will have, such as a massive horn, wings or intricate colour patterns. I like adding an animal in with the dragon's concept, such as mixing in the features of a lion. This will give you a very unique look and give you something strong to build on as you go.

2 SURROUNDINGS

Surroundings are very important in a dragon's creation. The setting really defines the beast. I like making the dragon part of the environment, like most creatures tend to be. A bright red dragon is going to be quite obvious to any animal in a lush green forest, therefore will be a starving dragon. Sometimes a landscape will inspire a dragon concept. Try coming up with a dragon based in an extreme environment: you may come up with something very interesting. The setting can also complement a dragon's personality and mood and make it more dynamic.

3 ANIMAL REFERENCES

When drawing a dragon it's good to have animal references around you, they will aid you greatly. Some creatures I look at frequently while painting are lions, elephants, birds, bats, komodo dragons, snakes, and lizards. I even use fish on occasions to inspire creative scales.

4 PROPORTIONS

Since dragons are fantasy creatures, the proportions can vary greatly. There are some basic measurements to keep *in mind, however.* Lengthwise, about *10 heads* length is an acceptable measurement with the tail being around six or so of those heads. The tail should end up being about 1.5 times the body. Width wise the body should *be* around 1.5 heads wide although this is very generalised. The wingspan should be just under twice the length of the body including the tail. Larger bodied dragons may have greater wingspans while the petite will most likely need less of a span to keep flight.

> ❝When it comes to mass, the dragon's body, excluding the head, neck and tail, will be about the size of an elephant❞

5 SCALE

In comparison to a human, I generally give the dragon a height, while in **idle stance**, of about two to three human lengths. When it comes to mass the dragon's body, excluding the head, neck and tail, it will be about the **size of an elephant** (generally speaking).

6 THE SKELETAL STRUCTURE

It's important to know where the bones are in the dragon. This is because, when you've got the basic bone structure, it's much easier to wrap flesh around the bones. You don't have to know the exact bones but you should know the key points where they are more prominent and noticeable. These bones will include the collarbone, scapula, pelvic bones, a few of the more prominent vertebrae, joints, rib cage, and so on. Knowing your anatomy will help give the details necessary to transform a cartoony creature into to a detailed and properly structured dragon.

7 THE SKULL

The dragon's skull is the most crucial part of its head, so you need to know the major bones such as the zygomatic (cheek) bone, nasal cavity, orbital ocularis, and mandible. Once you have the bones drawn in, everything else is a breeze. When I'm trying to figure out how to create a skull I'll look up various examples, including crocodile, bird, dinosaur, and human skulls, to get a better idea of what's going on underneath the skin.

8 MUSCLE

Every creature has muscle tone and you need to understand how muscles wrap and work their way around the bone structure. With this knowledge you can create arms, legs, stomachs and so on correctly. No matter how distorted or exaggerated the appendage you create may be, if you correctly work the muscles in you will have a believable creation.

Artist Insight

9 TEETH

The teeth help define the dragon's whole face: if you draw big canine teeth, it will have a much different overall look than if you have smaller lizard-style teeth. A good reference for teeth would be crocodiles because their teeth jut out and look dangerous.

10 THE SKETCH

When I'm sketching out the dragon the first thing I do is lay down the S shaped line for the spine. Dragons are very curvy and S shaped, so it helps to lay that down right away. Once I have that basic shape, I put the ovals in position for the head and body. As a comparison of these two sizes, you should be able to insert about two of the head into the body (more or less).

11 LIMBS

The best thing I can say about arms and legs is to study **references** such as lizards, crocodiles, and even lions. It's important to get the limbs right so that the dragon **looks grounded**.

12 THE ARMS

In some cases the arms need to be large enough to **support the dragon** when it's walking on all fours. In other cases the dragon may not use its arm for support at all, so you will have to decide what you want for your dragon. When the arms are positioned against the body they should **stretch down** to around about where the tail begins.

13 THE LEGS

The legs are made up of **three main bones**. Their placement is somewhat Z shaped; this type of leg is fairly common and is easy to find reference for. Most four-legged animals have **similar leg structures**. For the feet I tend to lean towards birds' feet more than lizards' because they have more structure to them. I like to use ostrich feet for references: they are very muscular and defined.

14 AGE

Age helps to give it character: worn down skin and battle scars. You can also give the beast hazy eyes. It makes them very mysterious, which dragons tend to be. It can also make the dragon looking wise. Adding these features gives a story element to the beast, which you can build upon, and will lead to further development.

15 WINGS

The first step to wings is deciding their purpose. If the dragon spends most of its time in the air then you should probably give it the muscle support needed to maintain flight. If the wings are for show the muscle structure may not be as prominent. Bat wings make good reference.

16 MAKING SENSE

When drawing out your creation, try to ensure things make sense. You don't want to finish a piece and realise the wings would never get the beast off the ground. If the dragon breathes fire maybe you should make room for fire glands under the lower jaw.

17 COLOURS

There are many things you can do with colours on a dragon's body. I like using cooler blues and pinks for the dragon's underside because it adds a softer element to the beasts. I also like the concept behind sharks' colour design, where the shark is invisible to those looking up because of the light belly and invisible to those above because of the dark top. Try using colours to emphasise certain parts of the body.

18 EYES

The typical dragon eye is the yellow snake eye, but if you look at reptiles you'll see that there are countless eye types. Smaller eyes will give a more evil and mysterious look while larger eyes will create a more curious and harmless creature. I like to use an eye colour that stands out from the skin colour, too.

19 PREPARING THE SURFACE FOR SCALES

When painting the skin I use a **big dark brush**, logically splashing colours around to cover the area. I use dark to give it weight and I use colour to ensure it has a nice glow. I then go in with **lights and darks**, still being messy to give character to the skin. Obviously I'm splashing the darker colours where their should be shadows and the lighter colours where I would want the highlights. Then I throw an **overlayed texture** on top to busy up the skin and to hide any obvious brush strokes.

20 SCALES

Once you have textured skin the scales won't be so tedious because the texture gives the **illusion of scales**. You can just add a few scale stokes to accent the skin. Not every inch needs a scale. That's what the texture is for. I speckle the surface with a translucent brush and then speckle areas that benefit the form, such as where the light hits the skin.

21 DRAGON ATTRIBUTES

Figure out what sort of attributes your dragon should have. Use your environment to help you out. For example, if your dragon lives in the water, maybe it should be slim and aerodynamic. Look up some bizarre animals: they may help to lead down a fitting path for your dragon.

22 COLOURING THE BACKGROUND

When I'm creating a background for a dragon, I usually use it as a tool to strengthen the creature's atmosphere and mood. Sometimes I colour the background simply to make it stand out better. With dragons I feel they are a large part of nature and should fit in with their setting.

23 GOING FURTHER

If you get stuck, create a story for your developing beast. Why is it here? Is it good or evil? If so, is there a reason why it's that way? Maybe it was tormented and is nervous. Solving questions like these can help further develop your concept.

24 DRAGON LORE

If you have trouble coming up with your own story, there are massive amounts of dragon myths and legends to pull from. If you're looking to draw dragons it'd be good to know a bit about their origins.

25 OTHER DRAGONS

There are so many types of dragons that it would be very hard to discuss them all. The 'classic' dragon is the European dragon with its wings and fire breathing capabilities. The other famous one is the Eastern dragon, with the serpent-like body and four small legs. These are the two most commonly drawn dragon types. ●

> **If you get stuck, create a story about your developing beast. Why is it here? Is it good or evil? Why is it that way?**

6'0"

5'0"

4'0"

Photoshop
THE UNUSUAL SUSPECTS

Artist PROFILE

Jonny Duddle
COUNTRY: UK
CLIENTS: Codemasters, Warthog, Eurocom

Jonny has been working as a concept artist in the games and entertainment industries for seven years.
www.duddlebug.com

DVD Assets
The files you need are on the DVD
FOLDERS: PSDs, Screenshots
SOFTWARE: Photoshop, CS2 (demo)

Jonny Duddle explains how a 'line-up' can help the games industry size up new characters before 3D modelling begins

This workshop will focus on producing a 'line-up' of characters. The majority of my work involves creating character concepts for the games industry, and there have been numerous occasions where I've been asked to produce a line-up to help an art team evaluate the height and size relationships of a game's characters. Putting the characters together on a sheet at the concept stage promotes discussion of

how those characters will relate to each other on screen before significant time is invested in building 3D models.

This character sheet isn't for a 'live' project, so I've plucked the subject matter from an old illustration of mine, and plumped for a circus. The characters will be painted on a sheet with height lines. When you use height lines on a concept sheet, there are two main options. The first is a proportional method using 'heads' as a unit. For example, the human

figure is often said to be eight heads tall, so there would be eight divisions and a standard character's head would be the same height as one division.

The alternative is to use real units of height, such as centimetres, or feet and inches. On this sheet I'm going to use feet and inches because I find it's often easier in art meetings to discuss a 'real world' measurement. People relate to a character that's quoted as six feet tall more readily than a design that is eight heads tall.

Layer groups

I regularly use layer groups to organise my layers in Photoshop. On a character sheet like this, I can easily toggle visibility for multiple layers, add a mask or use Free Transform to scale or distort a group. Many of these tasks can be performed without layer groups, but when there's a logical structure, such as a group for each character, it can save lots of time and confusion.

2 Sketching ideas

I start with some loose sketches of the characters. I draw each on a separate layer to enable compositional changes, as well as for easy editing. I have a good idea of how I want to place the figures on the sheet, but they'll probably need moving about as the drawing develops. Here, composition is less important than it would be for a conceptual illustration, but characters like these often peer down from office walls for months and good presentation is important. I also need to leave enough space around the figures to enable the viewer to accurately interpret the build and height of each character.

3 Designing the characters

These characters are new, some loosely based on one of my existing illustrations. In a 'live project' most of the characters would already have been designed. So in reality, this sheet could be produced by simply cutting and pasting the existing concepts, and then arranging them on the sheet with the appropriate height relationships. But even with existing concepts, an art director may ask for a whole new sheet to present the characters effectively at a team meeting, to senior management or to the publisher.

4 Clowning around

Most of the characters arrive on the page quite fluently, but I spend far too much time struggling with the clown design. He starts off with a tuba, inspired by my existing circus illustration, but I don't think he fits with this line-up. So I keep searching and spend ages playing around with his features, before I have a moment of inspiration while supping a cup of tea and staring at my screen. I decide to go for a weird, conjoined-twin design. It takes a few versions, while I play around with heads and hats, before I settle on almost identical faces with contrasting expressions.

5 The finished line art

Next, I add detail to the anatomy, costumes and accessories. I search online for references, such as accordions, vintage chainsaws and falconry gloves, to guide me. I don't get too hung up trying to get a perfect drawing, as a lot of the work can be done during the painting stage.

6 Base colours

I usually work from a dark background. I start by painting in all of the figures in a dark, desaturated blue on a new layer. This forms a solid base for my painting and helps define the silhouettes. As I go along I'll paint in large areas in more appropriate base colours, such as the deep brown on the skin of the clown. I usually work from a dark colour and build up to lighter colours and highlights.

7 Back to the clown

The clown was a struggle during the sketching stage, so I get stuck into him first. I want him/them to look a bit ill and stitched together, so I pick a pale watery green for his main skin colour and roughly paint his facial features, including white face paint and ruffle. ➡➡

1 Height lines

On my 480x290mm image, I create a grid and drag seven horizontal guides at 40mm intervals to mark out six feet. To create a guide, ensure that the rulers are visible, place the cursor over the ruler and drag across the image. Then, using the Line tool set to 0.8mm and Fill Pixels, I draw seven lines along the guides. By using View>Snap>To Guides, the lines will sit directly over the guides. I add some text to the top three lines to clarify the units being used. Once you've created a sheet like this, it's worth saving a template for future concepts.
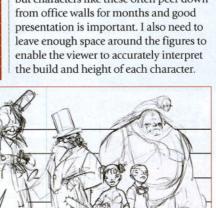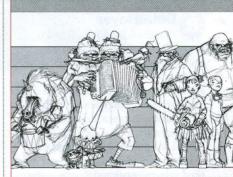
GAMES CHARACTERS
Reach new heights in anatomical adjustment

These characters vary a lot in height. In the games industry, particularly in realistic games, there may only be two or three different skeletons ('rigs') at set heights, so all characters would need to fit on this limited number of skeletons. This is to keep down the cost of lots of 3D artists producing lots of different skeletons, to enable different characters to share animations and to keep down the impact that all of those moving joints would have on the console's processor. But you can create very different characters on one or two skeletons by effective anatomical adjustments and, more noticeably, animation. By plotting out the important joints and drawing different body shapes and weights and poses, it's amazing how much variation can be achieved.

8 Detail layer

I continue to add detail to the clown faces, including stitched-on craniums and face paint. I decide to get the clown to an almost finished standard, which will help establish the level of finish for the rest of the characters on the sheet. I create a layer group for each character, so that each can be viewed and possibly printed separately, although a couple of the characters won't need to he fully painted if parts of their body are going to be obscured.

9 Blocking colours

Once I've got the clown to a reasonable level of finish, I decide to block in colours for the whole image to establish a colour scheme. I want to establish a consistent looking circus troupe, so I plan to limit my palette for the clothing to red, white and black. I concentrate on blocking in the main shapes for each character with some important elements, such as the large ruffles, slightly more detailed.

PRO SECRETS

Transform tools

I have Edit>Free Transform mapped directly to one of my Wacom ExpressKeys, because I use it so often! I find the transform particularly useful for sketching. Once I've drawn a figure, for instance, I can play around with parts of the body by scaling, rotating or distorting and will often find a more exaggerated pose that works better.

MODEL SHEETS

Present your character from different angles

This line-up isn't a model sheet: it's a form of character sheet, because it places the figures in poses that attempt to convey some of their character, mood and personality. A model sheet is normally a series of orthographic drawings that present an individual character from different angles, such as a front, back and side view. The figure is generally stood straight in a position referred to as a 'bind pose'. This is the position in which the 3D character model is 'bound' to the 3D skeleton. The figure will have their arms either straight out at sideways 90 degrees to the body or, because there can be a lot of shoulder distortion at 90 degrees, with the arms at 45 degrees to the body. These orthographic views are usually used as a template within the 3D package. I've also been asked to produce more informal model sheets with three views of a character in a more informal pose. This can give the modeller more input and the opportunity to build their interpretation of the concept.

10 Scaling elements

While blocking in the colours, I keep an eye out for any anatomical problems or shapes and proportions that I'm unhappy with. The small drummer clown is the first noticeable problem. His head sits a little high and his baby-like proportions aren't quite right, so I select his head on the line drawing with the Lasso tool, and use Edit>Free Transform to scale his head. By moving the centre handle of the Transform to the box at the centre of the top edge, I can keep the top of the hat in position and scale from that point. By holding down Shift I can constrain the proportions.

11 Colour scheme

The red, white and black colour scheme seems to be working and the costumes look consistent. There are large areas of skin and fur, so these provide some variation in colour, while the performers are brought together by the colour of their outfits. Perhaps the biggest exception is the strongman, who's showing off his ample tummy in a skimpy leotard. I was happy with the sketched version, but can't seem to get enthusiastic as I block in his colours.

12 Muscle man

I get distracted by my concerns about the strongman and begin to work into the design and try various faces. I paint directly, and each time I

think I'm on to something I save the files with a new, consecutive version name. He started off in my head as a bruising British bulldog type, but as I paint he becomes a robust Italian ice cream seller with an eye patch. I like the new look! One of the best things about working digitally is the ability to experiment like this without building up too many thick layers of real paint or having to start over.

13 Pug

Before blocking in the colours of chainsaw girl and her sidekick in the foreground, I decide to consolidate some of the other characters. I start with the pug and the drummer clown. The pug was sketched without reference, so I find a couple of reference images online to check the colours. I've used the same brush for pretty much everything so far (17 pixel Chalk with Opacity set to Pen Pressure), but I use a Raked brush that I also used on the mandrill, which I find excellent for fur.

14 Instruments

I go back to the reference that I collected for the instruments and take elements from various photographs to paint the accordion. I don't attempt to get perfectly straight lines and hard edges, but try to give myself some freedom for wonky lines and stylisation. I experiment with a couple of more gaudy colour schemes for the case and bellows, but end up opting for an austere black and silver that doesn't compete with the characters and costumes.

15 Chainsaw girl

I finally tackle the chainsaw girl and her brave sidekick. I'm in the flow of things and the colours go down just how I want them. I make a change to the boy's arms and bandage them down to

his hands. I like the idea that the girl isn't as accurate with her chainsaw as she should be, so the boy's arms are bloodstained and he's picked up a hefty scar across his face. It's good to have fun with characters and see where you can lead their story. If you've gone too far, a drawing might not get approved, but unless you come up with lots of different ideas your characters can easily become repetitive and dull.

16 Using reference

I go back to the chainsaw reference that I collected from the web. I start off painting a rusty chainsaw and consider spattering the chain with blood, then decide to keep it clean, but with paint chips and scratches. I don't follow the reference too closely and add big spikes to the chain, which are probably impractical, but they look cool. It's also worth remembering the size at which the image will be printed. There's no point getting absorbed by all the tiny details of a vintage chainsaw when they'll be difficult to see when printed.

PRO SECRETS

Just paint!

It's easy to spend too much time worrying about your selection of characters, whether you've got enough reference or how you can fit everything on one sheet. The nice thing about working digitally is that you can get stuck in and worry about most of those things while you're working. Everything is 'transformable', 'undo-able' and doesn't cost a fortune in wasted paper and paint. So don't procrastinate, just paint!

17 The ringmaster

The ringmaster is rather less strange than everybody else in the line-up. He's got a pet jackdaw that he handles like a bird of prey. I'd imagine that its favourite snack is children's eyes. I often make notes as I draw and paint, to remind me of the ideas and stories that spring to mind. If you need to present your drawing it's good to have something to say and even better to be brimful of enthusiasm.

18 Mandrill!

Last, but not least, is the mandrill. I saved him until last because I enjoy painting fur, and I knew I'd be getting tired towards the end of the sheet. It's tempting to start with the most enjoyable part of a painting, but that leaves you with nothing to look forward to! And

there's nothing worse than trying to paint the most difficult bit at the end with a fuzzy head, weary arm and weary eyes.

19 Adding detail

There's very little left to do. I paint the mandrill's drum from reference, and keep it on a separate layer. As a separate layer it's easy to edit and move about and doesn't interfere with the fur and hands. The mandrill's fur suddenly looks very green, but it seems to fit with the green skin of the two-headed clown and also the boy's outfit, so I resist fiddling with its saturation.

20 Finished?

I think I'm done. I assess each of the characters in turn and hide all other layers so only one layer group is visible. By looking at each character individually it's much easier to spot any unfinished details or mistakes. I make a few small adjustments and decide to call this line-up finished! Hopefully the sheet will clearly present this selection of characters and give a good idea of their height and size relationships. ●

PART 2

Cinema 4D
MODELLING A LANDMATE

Now you've created a 3D anime character, give them a 'Landmate' – an anime-inspired power suit. Using Cinema 4D and Sketch & Toon, **Adam Benton** shows you how

Artist PROFILE

Adam Benton
COUNTRY: UK
CLIENTS: 3D World, T3, MacFormat, Powergen, Britvic, Saatchi & Saatchi, Wunderman

Adam is a freelance illustrator who has a passion for sci-fi and fantasy. After the success of a recent award-winning independent film, he's now starting work on a project with Touchstone.
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DVD Assets
FOLDERS:
Scene files
SOFTWARE:
Cinema 4D 10 (demo)

Following on from last issue's workshop, in which I demonstrated how to set up and shade an Appleseed-style anime character in 3D, I am going to explore another facet of the distinctive Appleseed style, by modelling a power suit/vehicle, known as a Landmate. These armoured, robotic suits enabled the characters in the movie to fly, run at greater speeds, and generally added some bionic muscle power. The overall look could also be likened to a Gundam, or other Japanese comic style robot or power suit.

To explain every step of creating a model such as this would require a lot more space than is available here, so this will be more of an overview of specific methodology I would employ through 'box modelling' techniques, how specific effects are achieved, and what tools to use.

I'll also be making some subtle use of the Sketch & Toon shader created in part one of this workshop, to augment more traditional shaders, thus giving our 3D creation a unique look, which is a blend of 3D depth and tonality, and line outlines. Some previous knowledge and familiarity with the Cinema 4D GUI and basic toolset is expected, although some tool-specific tips are given along the way where applicable. Please refer to the application manuals for more information.
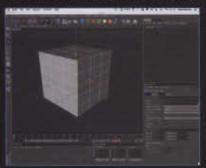
Full-size screen grabs have once again been included on the DVD. These have the benefit of full-screen resolution. Related files are also included.

1 Box modelling
There are quite a few different approaches to modelling within Cinema 4D and its peers, and which method you choose is often suggested by the form of the subject matter to be created. However, one method that many favour, as it can be used for just about anything, is 'box modelling'. As the name suggests, it usually starts with a box or cube, and from this primitive shape, polygons can be extruded, pushed/pulled and further defined by cuts and subdivision.

2 Dividing cubes
From the Primitives palette, I select Cube, and in the Attributes Manager (AM)
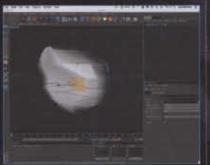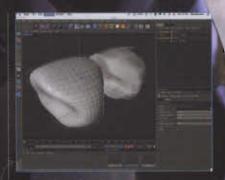

Shortcuts
Lock cut lines
When using the Knife tool in Loop mode, press Shift to lock the cut line on the object, enabling you to specify exact numeric placement in per cent.

window, start by adjusting the amount of divisions (polygons) it will contain. It's possible to start with just a six-sided cube and start cutting up the faces to create the divisions. But often, starting with enough to shape the basic form while the divisions are equally spaced is a good way to help with the 'topology' or flow of your polys later.

3 Torso building
I start by making the cube editable (use the [C] key) and then, using the Live Selection tool and Shift+click, select the three centre polys on the top of the cube. Now switching to the Move tool, I can lift these polys up to create an angle on the

polys either side. Then, selecting the central poly only, I lift that further to create the 'shoulder' like slopes either side. This is going to be the Landmate's torso.

4 HyperNURBed
With my deformed cube selected, I hold down Alt while selecting the HyperNURBs (HN) object from the top palette. This places the cube as a child of the HN object, whose purpose is to smooth and round the child object by adding smoothed subdivisions. This enables us to retain a lower poly base object, with fewer polys, points and edges to manipulate to get the overall desired shape.

▶▶

Shadow Dancer outfit designed by Lourdes Mercado

Workshops

5 Close to the edge

HNs can make the object very soft and blobby with a mesh made of fairly equal divisions, so to add definition and harden the edges, I use the Knife tool in Loop mode. Select this tool, and as your pointer passes over the object, the Loop function shows a guide following the form of the object's 'loops'. By cutting very close to the right-hand edge, as shown, a nice, crisp, yet slightly bevelled edge is created.

6 Extruding

As well as pushing and pulling things into shape, it's necessary to add extra geometry to create specific protrusions and indentations, and this is where the Extrude tool comes into play. Hit [D] to access the Extrude functions, and view the options in the Attributes Manager. Here I have added the chest hump with a single outward extrusion (0), and also an inner extrusion with a division of 2 for the neck area. The torso area, although unfinished, is in sufficient shape for me to continue on to other parts of the body.

7 Shoulders

I start with the shoulder area (based on my image reference from the film). Starting with a simple Cylinder primitive, with its rotational segments reduced to 8, and height segments of 2, I make the cylinder editable [C], and then select Optimise from the Functions menu. This makes sure that the cylinder cap and tube points are connected, so that when we start to edit the caps, the whole cylinder deforms properly – try it with and without the Optimise function to understand. Using the same methods as with the torso cube, I select, scale, extrude and add Knife Loop cuts to further define the shape once it is placed inside a HN object. I make use of the Loop Selection option to speed up editing of whole areas of polygons on the cylinder.

8 Two's company

Once the shoulder disc is looking okay, I place it inside a Symmetry Object (also from the top palette). This is another object that will save time, and modelling, by duplicating anything contained within across a chosen axis. It also gives flexibility for further tweaking on only one side, or one version of the mesh. Any edits, rotations and moves you apply to the right-hand one will be carried out on the left. Note that I have placed my cylinder inside a Null Object first, by pressing Alt+G and then placed that in the Symmetry object. This enables other objects to make use of the duplication, rather than needing multiple Symmetry objects in a long hierarchy. I add another cylinder, and edit that similarly, and place it inside the Symmetry hierarchy also.

PRO SECRETS

Spreading it about

As with all creative processes, whether it be drawing, sculpting or 3D modelling, let yourself work progressively – don't focus too much on just one area or element at any time. This can cause the area to become overworked, and a lot of time can be wasted getting into ruts. It's better to have the whole form 'blocked in', and then flick between the parts, tweaking as you go – this ensures your proportions are more accurate, and the mesh still has enough flexibility for further changes down the line.

9 Body building

For the upper arm section, I start with a cube divided twice in the X & Y axis, which I then stretch vertically, and extrude the top outer polygon. This is added to the HN and Symmetry hierarchy and by using the Loop Selection tools, and the Knife's Loop Cut mode, I start to edit the shape to add form and curvature. While scanning over my reference, I decide to go back into the torso object and extrude some polys to create some bumps on the shoulder tops.
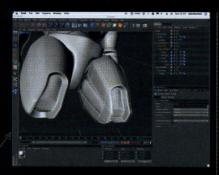

10 The pelvis

Using the same techniques again, I shape the forearm from a basic cube and place it within the hierarchy. Time to start on the pelvis area, which again begins with a cube. This time the divisions are set at X=3, Y=2, Z=3, and once made editable, the cube is squashed a little flatter.

11 Adding definition

After some basic shaping with the Extrude, Move and Scale tools, I use another method to add definition to the thigh sockets of the pelvis object – Inner Extrude. This tool creates an inset cut or cuts (depending on the subdivision settings in the AM), which helps tighten up the lines within the HN object.

12 A bit of thigh

Starting with another divided cube, the thigh shape is quite easily attained by extruding the top-right three faces upwards, and then by tightening/hardening lines of definition with the Knife tool (see screens). With the [V] shortcut, I access the Loop Selection tool, while switching over to the Edge tool mode, so that I can select the central band around the thigh, and expand them universally with the Scale tool. At this point, I can also move that loop of edges up or down the thigh to add the bulk where I want it. Finally, once the overall shape is there, I extrude some extra detail into the thigh sides, and use Inner Extrude on the base/knee part of the thigh, followed by an Extrude upwards, to create a recessed area.

13 Artistic licence

I follow the same procedure with the lower leg, and as I add each of these new limbs, I make sure that they are a child of the previous limb, which enables a simplified form of rigging – I can rotate the thigh and have the lower leg follow. I'm constantly checking my reference screen grabs from the film, but ultimately I'm making my own aesthetic decisions on how I want certain elements to look, and using creative licence where possible.

14 Knees up

The knee joint is a flattened cube, which I Loop cut twice down the middle (into thirds), and by grabbing both outer edge polygons, I am able to pull them back

with the Move tool, and create a rounded knee casing. Some additional Knife cuts define the bend points further, along with some horizontal cuts to enable further moulding of the shape.

15 The big picture

I take a step back and get an overall feel of the form. This enables me to go from limb to limb making slight shape and scale changes, while adding further detail. By keeping everything as a relatively low poly mesh within a HyperNURBs object, I'm able to make significant form changes without trying to juggle too many points and polys, which would otherwise cause distortions, and inconsistencies in the meshes. Now I tackle feet, this time starting with a cylinder primitive, which is slightly better for the foot shape I want.

16 Antennae

Something that's quite distinct in the Appleseed characters, and in other anime bots, is the ear or wing-like antennae/sensors mounted on their head or shoulders. These are probably the most complex of all the body parts, purely because of the detailing and specific shape. However, once again, they are created from the lowly, but ever versatile cube primitive, with some selective loop cuts and scaling.

17 Getting a head

The head is going to break the mould of previous body parts by being made from several objects, but the basic form is still derived from a cube. Once a basic shape is achieved, I switch to one of the 'flat-on' views (from above) and select all of the polygons on the head's left side. These can then be deleted, and the resulting half-head can then be placed inside a Symmetry object. Now any changes I make to the right side will be translated to the left, saving time, and making sure we retain total symmetry. A cylinder primitive is also shaped and placed in the right-side hierarchy, which is also duplicated to the left via the Symmetry object.

18 Eye, eye

I've given my Landmate four outer eyes and one large central eye. These are made using a single cylinder primitive, which is duplicated via a Symmetry object (for the three smaller ones), and a single duplicate enlarged for the central one.

19 Hands up

It saves time to create one finger hierarchy and duplicate it four times to get the other fingers and thumb. The relative scales can then be adjusted to add natural variation in sizes. Again this is done with simple manipulation of cubes. I also add simple sphere primitives to act as ball joints. The other geometry can be placed as children of each of these, enabling their simple rotation to create poses.

20 Finishing touches

To add further definition to the body casing, giving the impression of seams, I select some of the tightly spaced polygon loops I created previously, and use the Extrude function, with some subdivision, to create both depth and a hard edge. The final touches involve making selection tags and materials for the overall body, eyes and eye lenses, and using the line shader from last issue's workshop. ●

Painter & Photoshop

CLASSIC TALE WITH A TWIST

Follow aspiring illustrator Will Beck as he takes a well-known story and sets it in a different world

Artist PROFILE

Will Beck
COUNTRY: UK
CLIENTS: ImagineFX

Will has always felt his drawings would naturally transfer to the digital realm and has been developing his skills in Painter and other apps, as well as traditional artistic disciplines.
will_beck@tiscali.co.uk

DVD Assets

The files you need are on the DVD
FILES:
01 Post-Nuke Oz Sketch. PSD, 02 Post-Nuke Oz Tin Man.PSD, 03 Post-Nuke Oz Dorothy.PSD, Post Nuclear Oz.tif
FOLDERS: Full Screenshots
SOFTWARE:
Photoshop CS2 (*Demo*), Painter IX.5 (*Demo*)

S ometimes an idea for an image just sticks in your head and you have to just go with it. That's how it was when I thought about the many reinventions of the Wizard of Oz tale; none, to my knowledge, had adapted it to a Post-Apocalyptic setting. That led me to imagining what these incarnations of the Oz characters might be: Dorothy could be a tough, Mad Max-style biker girl and the Cowardly Lion an experimental mutant escaped from some scientist's (or Wizard's) laboratory. The shapes of the Tin Man suggested to me a soldier in vaguely pulp-sci-fi armour and the Scarecrow a ragged, wasteland mutant. I pictured the

characters in a group, on a road and looking outwards toward or past the viewer. The composition would be a wide, landscape format image, suitable for a comic or magazine cover.

In this workshop I want to give an insight into my methods and demonstrate how ideas change and adapt from the initial sketches to the finished digital painting. I created the image in Painter 7 on a fairly antiquated PC, with a little help from Photoshop.

In the past I've been content with the standard Painter brushes, so I took this opportunity to try out some customised ones – experimenting is key. On a couple of occasions I also used DAZ|Studio to help me solve perspective problems.

1 Preparation

I begin an image by doodling and sketching in pencil and ink on paper. In this case, after the rough sketches, I did a much larger pencil drawing of the scene to keep as a reference layer, importing it via File>Place. By varying this layer's opacity and by changing its Composite Method to Multiply I can still refer to my first drawing when I need to. Before starting the painting I created a custom palette as recommended by concept art supremo Ryan Church in ImagineFX issue 2. I put my most used brushes here, including a custom brush based on Jason Chan's tip in issue 4 (Circular, Single, Soft Cover) and a brush based on the one described by Linda Bergkvist in issue 7.

2 Nail down the background

I'd like the scenery to be close to finished before I begin work on the characters. I keep each distinct object of the backdrop on a separate layer so I can remove elements at a later stage if need be. To start with I mark the horizon, because it's going to be especially important in determining the angles and foreshortening on the characters. I build the background in successive layers and drop them to the canvas when I'm happy with them. Painter's Perspective grid is helpful at this stage for the road markings. When I'm reasonably satisfied with the scene I save the image, keeping the layers separate in case I need to change any background features.

3 Base colours first

Next I drop all the layers to flatten the image and save this version to paint the characters on to. Now it's time to start on the figures. I use the Detail and Standard airbrushes and a variety of oil brushes to loosely apply colours and textures, using my pencils as a guide.

4 Layers

Working on each character in turn I again build them up in successive layers. I draw in the figure with a dark Detail airbrush or sometimes a 2B pencil brush using my pencil sketch as a guide, but not simply tracing the lines. Then on a new layer, I colour in the areas roughly with the airbrushes and oil brushes. On top of that I use low opacity watercolour brushes, Diffuse Bristle and Soft Camelhair, to shade the forms and create texture. Finally I highlight areas to bring them out of the depth in a couple of ways – either by removing parts of the watercolour layer with the watercolour eraser or by painting on new top layer. I often use the invaluable Just Add Water tool at about this time to blend things that are too scruffy or where I want a smoother texture.

PRO SECRETS

Transparency in Painter

Painter's approach to transparency is quirky when compared to Photoshop. Tick the small box (in the Layers selection of the Objects palette) marked Pick Up Underlying Colour. and you can blend things with layers below the one you're working on. If you tick Preserve Transparency you mask out all areas on a layer that are empty. With neither ticked Painter treats empty areas on your layer as white if you try to blend them.

5 Tin Man in Photoshop
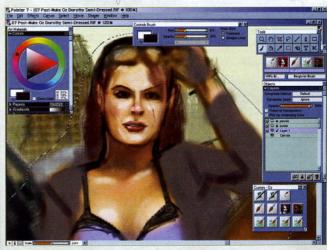
With a very geometric character like the Tin Man I recommend spending the time getting the basic shapes looking solid – a 3D package could help here. When I've painted him, I bring him into Photoshop to use the Dodge tool, with Range set to Highlights, to brighten the armour. Now he's too clean, so I add grime with the Diffuse Bristle and Dry Bristle watercolour tools back in Painter.

6 Warrior Dorothy

Dorothy is created in much the same way, with a series of layers building up the forms on top of the sketch. I move Toto from his original position in Dorothy's arms, because I think he could distract the viewer. Then I block in a new arm for Dorothy. I paint her skin fairly quickly, adding a bit of texture with the Pepper Spray and Watercolour brushes.

7 Tweaking the gingham

The fiddly elements are going to be the pattern on Dorothy's dress and the details of the gun, which I want to be a real-world weapon to add a bit of authenticity. Back in Photoshop I paste in a basic blue and white check pattern and transform it with the Perspective and Distort tools, until it fits the area of blank cloth on the figure. I set this layer to Overlay and I bring the image back into Painter. I use the Pinch and Bulge tools to adjust the pattern until it looks more like part of the painting.

8 Lion's mane

I make sure the underlying figure structure of the Lion looks solid before I start work on the fur layers. By using reference – an image of a basic hand, rendered in DAZ – I find it easier to make the Lion's hand look like more than just a paw. I look closely at some photos of real lions and I realise the Lion-man could benefit from new brushes, which might help me to get his fur right. I try many adjustments of the Bristle settings of a Static Bristle brush and the Feature

Shortcuts
Straight Line Drawing
B – freehand drawing
V – straight line drawing
The straight line tool is useful to create hard edges. Press V again when you want to start a new line.

PRO SECRETS

Use a 3D package

If you haven't got a troupe of easily bribed friends to pose for you, then DAZ|Studio or Poser 6 can be helpful tools, but like all references you shouldn't slavishly follow them. To relate the 3D objects to your 2D image import a (lower resolution if need be) version of the image into your chosen 3D program and apply it (as a texture map) to a flat plane of the same horizontal/vertical proportions as your image.

setting on a Round Camelhair brush until I settle on a few variations that I'm fairly happy with.

9 A Return to Oz

Having decided to move Toto, I now paint him in the space on the road between the Tin Man and Dorothy. The image is really starting to take shape now, but I am a bit unsatisfied with the buildings at the centre. So I create a new design (of a glowing power plant) over the original background layers I'd saved at the start. Unfortunately I hadn't created any proper masking areas, so I needed to carefully cut out the characters (with a Lasso and Eraser) to place on this new backdrop.

10 Redraw chainsaw

I blend the image together, and then I add some small finishing details

I'd thought up (and doodled) along the way. There was one area I wasn't happy with and helpful feedback from friends confirmed my suspicions that the chainsaw needed redrawing to correct the perspective and imply some more movement. For this kind of problem, I'd recommend you use anything you have access to: real-world reference, model props or mock-ups, or use a 3D package. A crude 3D object when placed in DAZ|Studio gave me a better idea of how I could paint a better version.

11 Off to see the wizard

For the finishing touches, I increase the image's contrast so it doesn't look too bleached-out. I've learnt a great deal along the way and thoroughly enjoyed this mixing of genres and experimenting with various aspects of Painter. I hope this encourages you to do the same.

Henning Ludvigsen's SPOTLIGHT

Our resident fantasy artist returns once more to take his monthly look at one of his favourite pieces of digital art, offering a critique, and giving valuable insight into what he likes and what makes this painting stand out

Featured artwork AZAZEL Artist **JULIE DILLON** Client **USRPG**

One thing I love about art is that even if several artists base their work on the same story or myth, all their pieces end up looking completely different from each other. Personally I found Julie Dillon's interpretation of the fallen angel Azazel very interesting. I have seen many paintings of angels and half-breeds, but the main figure in Julie's painting has so much character and attitude. The way she depicted the term of eternal punishment looks just right, that there's no holiday being stuck in Hell and all. All the

distorted faces, the red eyes and the chains linked to the main character also link the piece together, and this is all the information you need to understand what is going on in her work.

Julie has a razor-sharp sense of composition, and she explains: "Unfortunately, I ended up having so many ideas for the final illustration that I went through a dozen different drafts before settling on this particular composition." And I have to add that this is exactly what makes a piece stand out from the others: spending some extra

time and effort to get things sorted out and put into place by experimenting and discarding one solution for another.

Another reason for loving this piece is the colour scheme. At first glance it looks quite monochromatic, which does make it easy to enjoy. Julie gave depth to the painting by adding elements in the background using toned down versions of the semi-monochromatic colours. Also, keeping the closest characters dark is a clever way to create depth.

If anyone is studying composition, this piece should be part of the curriculum.

Artist PROFILE

Julie Dillon

AGE: 24
JOB: Freelance illustrator
FAVOURITE ARTISTS: Alphonse Mucha, Brian Froud, John William Waterhouse, Arthur Rackham, Yoshitaka Amano, Craig Mullins
TOOLS: Adobe Photoshop 5.5
WEB: www.jdillon.net
EMAIL: julie@jdillon.net

Artist insight: Julie reveals how she created her interpretation of Azazel

1 I started out by quickly and loosely blocking out the basic shapes and composition in simple colours. I wanted to get a feel for the overall mood and get the essence of my idea down on the screen as best as I could before I spent too much time on the details.

2 Here I adjusted the colour and started refining the composition, adding and discarding ideas as I went along. It's definitely not the most efficient way to work, but sometimes I find it helpful to enable flexibility and not be completely tied down to my initial idea.

3 In this image, the overall composition is almost where I wanted it, so I began zooming in and rendering the details. I try to build up the entire image as a whole rather than work piece by piece, so that it is easier for me to keep the image looking cohesive.

Have you seen an outstanding piece of art you want to see featured in Spotlight? Email **henning@imaginefx.com** with the subject Spotlight.

ImagineFX
Reviews

The latest digital art software, hardware, books, training and film releases…

14 PRODUCTS ON TEST

SOFTWARE

102 Poser 7
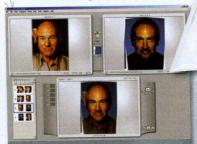A raft of new features await in the latest version of Poser

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Create stunning digital art on a budget with this low-price package

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A quick and easy way to morph seamlessly between faces, landscapes and animals

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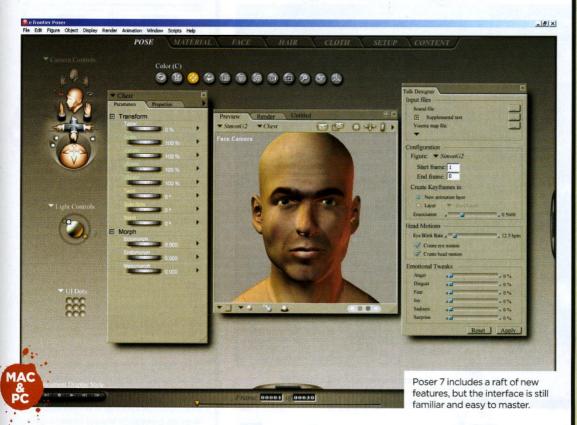
Poser 7 gets the once over from Brian Haberlin – page 102.

> **All the work included in this book is outstanding**

RATINGS EXPLAINED Magnificent Good Ordinary Poor Atrocious

Poser 7 includes a raft of new features, but the interface is still familiar and easy to master.

Poser 7

FIGURE MANIPULATION New posing tools, morph painting and multiple undo in the update of this popular package

PRICE $249 **COMPANY** e-frontier **WEB** www.e-frontier.com **CONTACT** via website

New releases of Poser are usually eagerly awaited. It's become the industry standard tool for artists working with 3D human figures, and recent additions to its toolset including dynamic hair and clothes and massive improvements in rendering have made its images both realistic and controllable.

Release 7 offers a suite of new tools as well as some useful performance enhancing upgrades. Importantly, Poser's finally got a multiple (and effective) undo option, and the render engine has also been streamlined so high-quality renders are a lot faster.

You can now paint on to figures, adding bulges or depressions in the skin to create new morphs for anything from pregnancy to alien heads. It's not the most responsive tool, but it does enable you to go beyond the morphs provided for your characters.

The addition of universal poses means that you can transfer poses much more accurately between human figures. A pose designed for the figures in Poser 4 should now be able to be easily converted for Victoria or the new Sydney figure.

If you use animation, you'll find it a lot easier in version 7. The new Talk Designer takes audio files and turns them quickly into lip sync animations with blinking, head movements and emotional response built in. There's also the ability to create layered animation so that you can produce complex movements without messing up everything you've done before.

Impressive new characters and good third-party models, along with support for the new multi-core processors during rendering, make this a decent upgrade. Version 7 does contain more for the animator than the stills artist, but it's still well worth a look. ●

DETAILS

Features
■ Character posing and animation
■ Realistic 3D rendering tools
■ Walk and talk designers for easy animation
■ Morph painting tool
■ Dynamic hair and cloth simulators

System Requirements
PC: Windows 2000/XP
512MB RAM
1GHz processor
700MHz processor
OpenGl Graphics card
Mac: OS X v.10.3.9 or 10.4
(Universal Binary)

ARTIST PROFILE
BRIAN HABERLIN

The Witchblade co-creator on why he's a Poser fan

Can you describe the way that you work?

I use everything and anything from 3D to making my own real world paints to get the look I need on a piece. I usually get bored with one style and change around.

How do you develop the concept for an image?

I have tons of sketchbooks. I'll put on some good music and doodle. Sometimes I'll look at classic illustrators/artists but more for the competitive poke they give me than design ideas.

When you've got that idea, how do you go about developing it?

I start with pencil and paper. From there I either develop that drawing fully or paint it in the real world. Or I'll use that drawing as a layout for 3D. But really using the 3D as most old school artists would use models and sets as reference or a base.

How does Poser fit into that?

Working with Poser is like having your own model studio, prop studio and set at your fingertips. I'll use it as a reference or, as with my animations, create direct renders with some post processing.

What other software do you most often use?

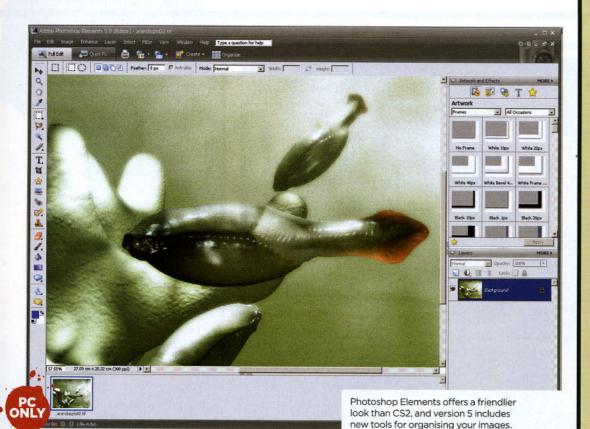Photoshop and Painter.

Which features of version 7 of Poser do you think are going to be of most use to you, and how will you use them?

The new high-res OpenGL renders save me hours. And the new layers for nonlinear animation help make complex animated actions a breeze.

Brian Haberlin and Haberlin Studios produce imagery for iconic comics such as Spawn, X-Men and Spider-Man.

www.haberlin.com

Photoshop Elements offers a friendlier look than CS2, and version 5 includes new tools for organising your images.

Photoshop Elements 5

CHEAPER CHOICE Do you really need Photoshop CS2 when so many of its features are available in Elements 5?

PRICE £70 **COMPANY** Adobe **WEB** www.adobe.co.uk **CONTACT** via website

As a digital artist, Photoshop is one of the key tools available to you. Buy Photoshop Elements instead and you can shave £500 off the price, so the question is, is this a worthwhile saving, or are you going to become so frustrated with the missing features that you end up buying Photoshop CS2 anyway?
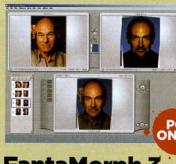
Elements is a reduced version of Photoshop and some tools have been left out. Most of the flashier effects filters from Photoshop are present, but a few of the subtler colour processing tools are missing (particularly those which enable you to work with 16-bit colours, and CMYK). The Vanishing Point tool and some of the masking tools are absent, as are some of the web and text formatting features.

That said, there's plenty left – customisable brushes, cloning and selection tools, layering and healing brushes are all available. There's also

a focus on organising your images that Photoshop CS2 lacks. You can create slideshows and quickly locate images on disk much more easily.

There are a lot of new features in version 5, but most are aimed at digital photographers rather than artists. There are tools for correcting lens distortion and sharpening images as well as the ability to work with RAW files from a wider range of cameras. There's a new Colour Curves tool for better colour correction and an advanced black and white filter for producing monochrome images.

All in all, this is a great product for the artist who's got better things to spend £570 on than Photoshop CS2 (you could get Poser, Project Dogwaffle, Bryce and Photoshop Elements for that). However, version 5 doesn't offer much more than version 4 to the fantasy artist, so if you're thinking of upgrading, take a good look at the list of new features first.

DETAILS

Features
- Custom paintbrushes
- Image correction and effects filters
- Advanced masking and layering tools
- Support for camera RAW images
- Cloning and healing brushes

System Requirements
Pentium 4 or Intel Celeron (or compatible) 1.3GHz processor Windows XP Service Pack 2 256MB of RAM

FantaMorph 3
MORPHING TOOL
Morph seamlessly between faces, landscapes and animals

Price Standard $30; Pro $50; Deluxe $100
Company Abrosoft
Web www.fantamorph.com
Contact via website

Rating

Whether you're using it to create new faces, to combine drawn and photographed elements or to build new plants, landscapes or animals, morphing is an effective way to combine visual ideas from different sources.

FantaMorph comes in three versions, the main differences between them being that the more expensive version enables you to combine several images rather than just two, and includes tools which automatically detect faces.

The package is easy enough to use – place locating points to guide the morph and you can see the results in real time. You can also adjust the colours of your images to match them prior to morphing, and you can select any frame of the finished sequence to export for use. Results are generally good, but you often need high-res sources and a lot of patience to achieve results good enough for a still image.

FantaMorph's tools are quick to pick up and easy to negotiate.

Take your speed painting and concept art to the next level as artist David Levy talks you through his innovative approach from start to finish.

MAC & PC

From Speedpainting to Concept Art:
Adobe Photoshop Custom Brush Techniques With David Levy

BRUSH UP YOUR SKILLS David Levy (aka Vyle) demonstrates his unique approach to creating custom brushes for fast and effective concept art

PRICE $60   **COMPANY** The Gnomon Workshop   **WEB** www.thegnomonworkshop.com

The Gnomon Workshop has a reputation for providing some of the best training DVDs available to artists in both the entertainment and design industries. And true to its ongoing commitment, its latest release, **From Speedpainting to Concept Art, doesn't fail to please.**

David Levy, aka Vyle, needs virtually no introduction. But just in case you've been living under a rock, he's one of the most talented and sought-after concept artists in the industry.

In this latest Gnomon instalment, David demonstrates his unique approach to creating custom brushes in Photoshop for use in developing fast and efficient concept art.

The video tutorial begins with David establishing a basic pitch for a storyline, using a slideshow of concept drawings and speed paintings. From here, he then walks you through the step-by-

step process of creating and testing a varied assortment of brushes, which he then uses in the subsequent speed painting and final concept chapters.

The third and final chapter is dedicated to the refinement and completion of a concept-art painting, with additional instructions for creating detail brushes and special FX.

Not only is David extremely thorough in explaining his process, but he also provides the set of brushes that he created for use in your own work, along with the layered Photoshop artwork files.

His detailed and comprehensive approach is a most welcome addition to the Gnomon library and will be to your own as well.

Whether you are a novice or seasoned professional, this DVD is an invaluable resource for anyone looking to take their speed painting or concept art to the next level.

DETAILS

Techniques
- Custom brush creation
- Speedpainting
- Teamwork
- Lightning strategy
- Detail brushes
- Scene refining

Chapters
1. The pitch
2. The speedpainting
3. The final concept/ refining

Length
- 120-minute lecture
- 40 minute of bonus material

ARTIST COMMENT
DAVID LEVY

David says: "I feel honoured that Gnomon asked me to do this DVD. It was a lot of work, as I wanted to make sure I explained the brush technique in the most objective way. I hope I succeeded in showing that this technique can be applied not only to 2D but in a broader manner to any type of modern digital tool. At a time where the quality and quantity of work is key and is turning commercial artists into art factories, it's in everyone's interest to develop ideas that will enable faster, better work. I'd also like to thank Sparth (Nicolas Bouvier) and the Montreal team, who are responsible for the development of these tools."

David Levy is senior concept artist at Steambot Studios.

www.thegnomonworkshop.com